

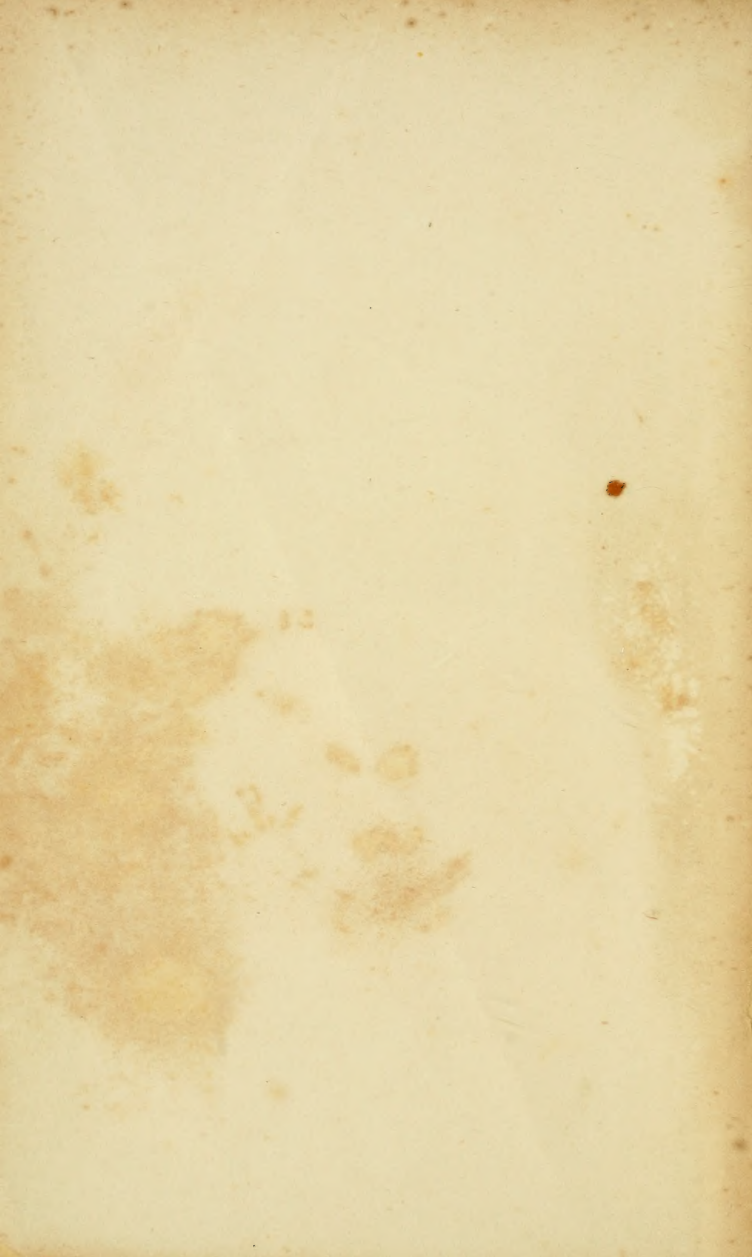
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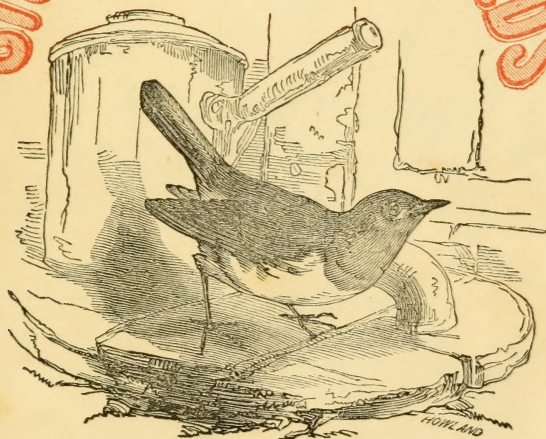




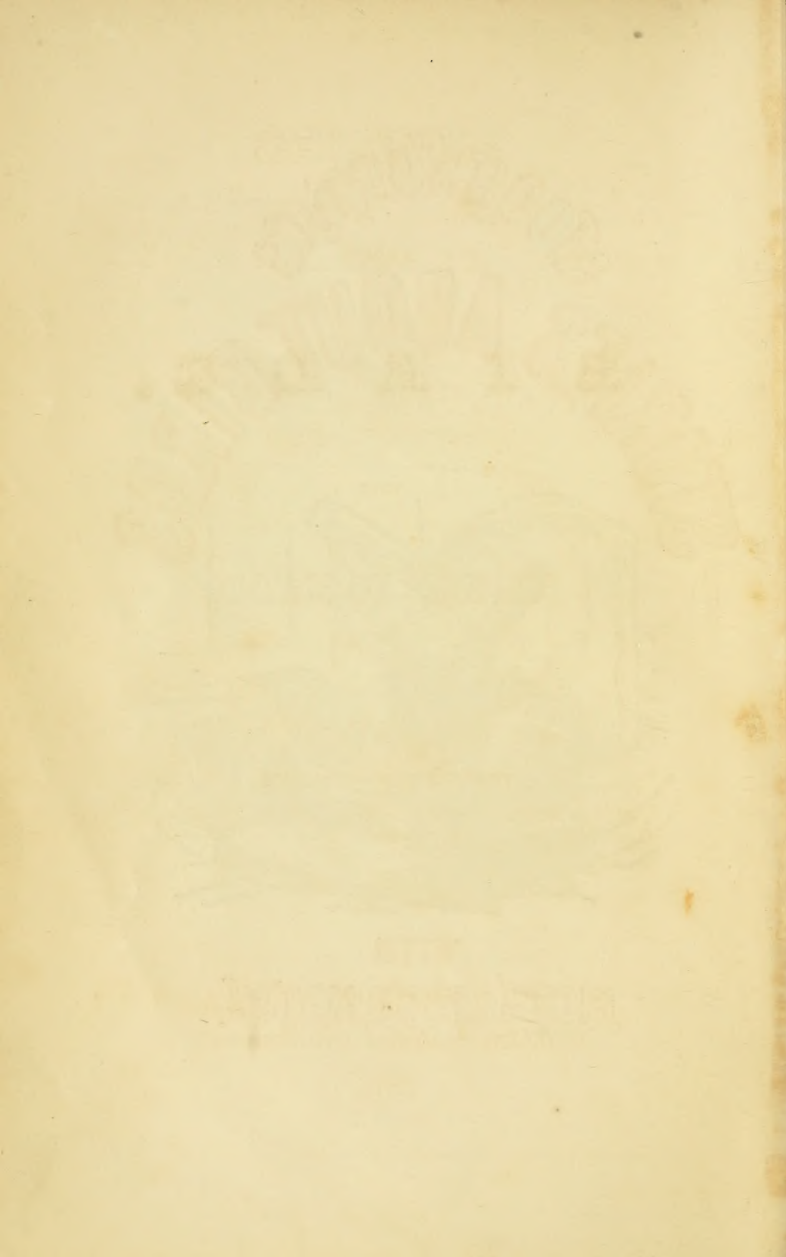


THE BULLFINCH.

WOODWORTH'S
STORIES ABOUT BIRDS



WITH
PICTURES TO MATCH



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STORIES

ABOUT

B I R D S.

WITH

PICTURES TO MATCH.

BY

FRANCIS C. WOODWORTH,

EDITOR OF "THE YOUTH'S CABINET," AUTHOR OF "STORIES
ABOUT ANIMALS," &c.

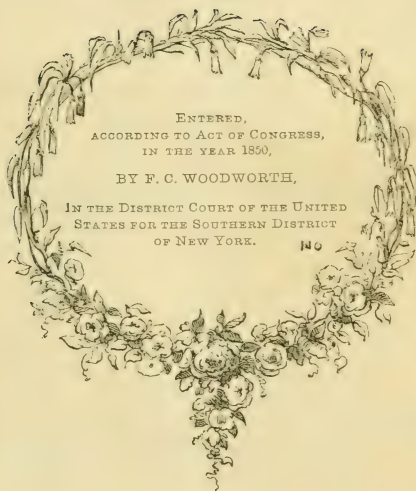
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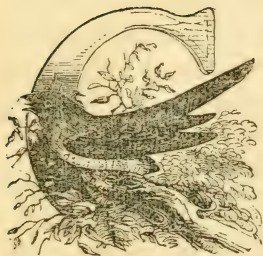
BY F. C. WOODWORTH,

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE UNITED
STATES FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT
OF NEW YORK.

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STEREOTYPED BY
BILLIN & BROTHERS,
10 NORTH WILLIAM-STREET, N. Y.

Preface.



COME, little folks, take a trip with me to Bird Land. I am going there, and want your company. In other words, I think of writing a book, filled with all manner of anecdotes about the birds; and I should like to have just such people as you are for readers. I shall not make my book for men and women—though they may read it, if they happen to fancy it—but I shall make it for boys and girls. I shall make it for you. I shall try to hunt up such stories as you like, and try to tell them in such a way as to please you. If you do not take an interest in my book, then, I shall be very sorry, and I frankly confess that I shall be somewhat disappointed.

Some time since a book of mine was published, called "Stories about Animals." This book embraced only that race of the animal kingdom sometimes called Quadrupeds. I never like to use hard words, if I can help it, when I am writing for the young. That is the reason why I named my book as I did, instead of calling it "Stories about Quadrupeds," a title which would have suited some very nice people much better. The volume, however, let its title be what it may, relates only to those animals which make their way through the world with the help of four legs.

In the Preface to this book a hint was dropped, that if those stories suited my young friends, and it was found that a great many boys and girls took a good deal of pleasure in reading them, the author might take it into his head to write another book filled with Stories about Birds, and that similar books, relating to Insects, Fishes, and Serpents, might follow. Well, the little people did like my first book. They bought it, at any rate, or their parents bought it for them; and that is pretty good proof that they liked it. So I began to think of printing my stories about birds. While I was thinking whether I would do it or not, a good many boys

and girls, and some older people, living in different parts of the country, wrote letters to me, saying that they were looking for the book on birds, and that they wanted to get a peep at it very much. So I made up my mind to publish it—and here it is, dedicated to all the boys and girls, in general, and to the good ones, in particular.

I am in love with the birds, dear reader. I am deeply in love with them. Many a time, since my residence in the city, when I have been able to spend a few days in the country, have I been affected almost to tears by the sweet music of Bird Land. And it is not for their music alone, that I love these light-hearted, fairy things; for many of them have no song, or but a poor one. I love them—those, especially, who hover near our dwellings, and build their nests in our orchards and on the trees, even, in our door-yards—I love them for their beauty, their innocence, their love for each other, their familiar and confiding disposition. And their nests, too! How curious, how wonderful they are!

“It wins my admiration

To view the structure of that little work—

A bird's nest. Mark it well, within, without;

No tool hath he that wrought; no knife to cut;

No nail to fix; no bodkin to insert;
No glue to join; his little beak was all.
And yet how neatly finished! what nice hand,
With every instrument and means of art,
And twenty years' apprenticeship to boot,
Could make me such another?"

Yes, reader, I am in love with the birds. So you need not wonder if I write like a lover, and if you once in a while see hidden under some of my stories a lurking wish that you, too, may become intimate with these friends of mine, so as to love them as fondly as I love them myself.

In preparing this volume, I have gleaned from various fields besides those which I can properly call my own. From Wilson and Audubon, especially, I have borrowed some of my best stories. I am much indebted, also, to the contributions of several personal friends. Nor must I forget to acknowledge, in this place, the courtesy of the proprietor of the American Museum in this city, who has given me free access to his rich collection of foreign birds.

THE AUTHOR.

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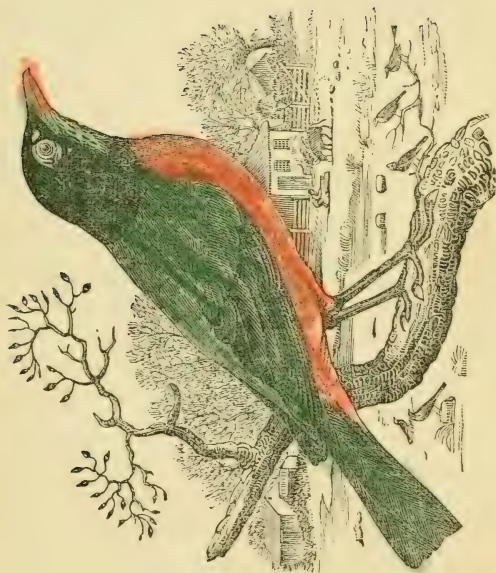
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THE AMERICAN ROBIN.

Stories about Birds.

The Robin.



OF all our native birds, I love the robin most—his notes are so cheerful, he is so confiding, and builds his nest so near my door. Besides, he is with us among the first in the spring. In the month of April, the robin commences his nest. He seems to have a preference for the apple-tree, and sometimes an orchard, within a stone's throw of the farm-house, will in the early summer months embrace quite a village of these birds. Watch their movements in April, and you will see them, in pairs, flying about from tree to tree, until they find a suitable place for their nest, and then they set about the work of building. The robin's nest is formed generally of small sticks and straws, held in their place by mortar. The inside is finished with a soft lining.

While the female robin is confined to the nest, the male brings her food when she is hungry, and sits on the same tree with her, or on one near by, and sings his song of love from morning till night. The robin is a most devoted husband.

It is very generally supposed that the robin who appears among us early in the spring, and who is so general a favorite, is the same bird which goes by the name of the robin red-breast in England. But this is a mistake. There is quite a difference between the two birds. Still there are so many pleasant associations connected with the red-breast of the father-land, that it seems almost a pity to be obliged to admit that there is such a difference. So, in these stories, I will treat them as if they belonged to the same family. They are, indeed, much alike in many of their habits, and neither family need complain that, for the sake of convenience, I have classed them together.

I remember once having killed a robin with a stone. I did it rather through carelessness than by design. The robin was as busy as he could be picking currants in our yard, when I threw a stone at him, to frighten him away. The stone hit the poor fellow, however—strange enough, I always thought, for I was

a very indifferent marksman—and he fell down from the bushes, fluttered a few minutes, gasped a few times for breath, and died. I wept a long time about that tragic affair. The image of the dying robin did not leave my mind for the entire summer, and I did not love to go near the spot where he died for months afterward.

A small family of robins were in the habit, one summer, of coming into the garden belonging to a gentleman of my acquaintance, and of helping themselves to cherries and currants. Well, there was plenty of fruit that year, enough for the family, and the birds, too. So the visitors were welcome. By and by, they grew very tame, and one day, when the windows were open, one of the robins entered the house and remained, apparently very contented and happy, a good while. Then he flew away, and joined his companions. Little Mary was sure he came to thank her father's family for their kindness in the matter of the cherries and currants. Perhaps he did. I am not inclined to dispute her, at any rate. Birds have a language of their own, and as I have never been able to understand it very well, it would be very foolish in me to undertake to tell what Mary's robin said and what he did not say,

especially as she was acquainted with the little fellow, and I was not. Near the house there were a great many rose-bushes; and every child knows that roses bear red berries, after the flower has fallen. The robins, when the cherries and currants were gone, directed their attention to the berries on the rose-bushes, and seemed to relish them very much. One day, there was a violent storm. The wind blew fiercely. In the midst of this storm, one of Mary's robins flew violently against a window, shattered the glass to pieces, and fell dead on the floor. Upon examination, one of these rose berries was found in his throat. The poor fellow was evidently choked with it. Mary informed me, however, that the bird was coming in to see her father, and to get him to remove the berry. Her father was a doctor, and she presumed the robin knew it as well as she did.

"I knew a lady, when I was a little girl," says a writer in Mrs. Follen's excellent publication, "The Child's Friend," "who was very fond of birds; and one morning, when she was dressing, she heard something tap and peck at her window. When she looked out, she saw all the ground covered with snow, and a poor little robin red-breast pecking at the window. She opened it, and threw him out some bread;

and, as long as the snow lasted, the robin came back every morning, and she fed him. When the warm weather came, the little bird could get food for himself, and flew away. The lady thought she should never see him again; but when the next winter came, one very cold morning, she heard a tapping at the window; and she opened the curtains, which were drawn before the windows, to keep out the cold, and there was her robin come back again. She was quite glad to see her little favorite once more, and she gave him plenty to eat every morning, all that winter; but when the warm weather came again, away he flew. Now it happened, at the beginning of the next winter, that the lady was very ill, and her window was not opened nor her curtains undrawn for many days; and when she looked out, she saw her pretty little robin stiff, and cold, and dead."

John Woolman tells the following story of himself: "A thing remarkable in my childhood was, that once going to a neighbor's house, I saw on the way a robin sitting on her nest, and as I came near she went off; but having young ones, she flew about, and with many cries, expressed her concern for them. I stood and threw stones at her, till, one striking her, she fell down dead! At first I was pleased

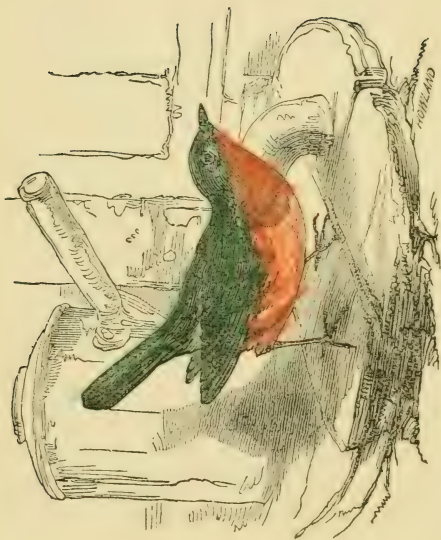
with the exploit; but, after a few minutes, I was seized with horror, at having in a sportive way killed an innocent creature, while she was careful for her young. I beheld her lying dead, and thought these young ones, for whom she had been so careful, must now perish for want of their mother to nourish them; and after some painful considerations on the subject, I climbed the tree, took all the young birds and killed them; supposing that better than to leave them to pine away and die miserably; and I believed, in this case, that Scripture proverb was fulfilled, 'The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.' I then went on my errand, but for some hours could think of little else but the cruelties I had committed, and was much troubled." My young friends need hardly be told that this man never killed one of these sweet songsters again.

Jesse, in his "Tales of Animal Instinct," mentions a singular proof of the robin's love for its young. "A gentleman," he says, "in my neighborhood, had directed one of his wagons to be packed with sundry boxes, intending to go with it to Worthing, a place at some distance from his residence. For some time his going was delayed, and he directed that the wagon should be placed in a shed in

his yard, packed as it was, till it should be convenient to him to send it off. In the mean time, a pair of robins built their nest among the straw in the wagon, and had hatched their young before it was sent away. One of the old birds, instead of being frightened away by the motion of the wagon, only left its nest occasionally, for the purpose of flying to the nearest hedge for food for its young; and thus, alternately affording warmth and nourishment to them, it arrived at Worthing. The affection of this bird having been observed by the wagoner, he took care, in unloading, not to disturb the robin's nest; so that the robin and its young returned in safety to Walton Heath, the place whence they were taken. The distance the wagon went, in going and returning, could not have been less than one hundred miles."

A correspondent of mine, whose veracity I cannot doubt, states that he was once a witness of a scene, which convinced him that snakes possess the power of charming birds. He says, "When I was a boy, I was passing through a forest, and, hearing a bird making a great ado, I stopped to investigate the matter. Upon the top of a small white-oak shrub, I saw a robin flying about hither and thither, keeping her

eyes intent upon some object. Soon I discovered that the object was a black snake, which had wound himself around the middle of a shrub. He kept his head toward the robin, and moved it in accordance with her movements. She would fly nearer and nearer to him, more and more rapidly making her peculiar chirping noise, which I cannot better describe than by saying that it seemed to indicate an agonizing delight. The poor bird acted as if she was fascinated; and the wily serpent acted as one intent upon her for his prey. I carefully watched all their manoeuvres, until the robin was within reach of that part of the snake's body which was not wound around the trunk of the shrub. He suddenly drew himself back, evidently with the intention of making a spring at her, while she now stood motionless. I could bear it no longer, but struck at the enemy with a club. The limbs of the shrub defended him from the force of my blow, and he escaped in the brush, as such villains are inclined to do. If my feelings had not been so much enlisted against the seducer, and in defence of the deluded and innocent bird, I doubtless should have been able to say, I saw the snake devour the robin. But it gives me much more pleasure to state that I saw the



THE ROBIN IN THE KITCHEN.

robin fly away from the snake, and go about his business."

When I was about eight years old, I found a young robin near the door of our house, who had a broken leg. Some cruel boys must have thrown a stone at the little fellow, I think. He was quite helpless. I ran and asked my mother what to do with him, and she gave me liberty to take him into the house, and nurse him. I did so. We did not call any surgeon to set his broken limb; but he soon began to grow better, and in less than a month he was quite well. It would have done your heart good to have seen how grateful the dear little creature seemed to be, and how perfectly at home he made himself in my mother's kitchen. Sometimes he would hop upon the chairs, and oversee the work that was going on among the tenants of the kitchen. Before he left us, he became so tame that he would allow me to take him up in my hand, and stroke his feathers. One day, thinking, I suppose, that, as he was entirely well, he ought not to be living on charity any longer, he sang his adieu, and left us. The other members of his family were waiting for him, and they all flew away together.

Some years since, while residing in one of the pleasantest country villages in Connecticut,

a robin came daily, though, at first, timidly and cautiously, to the door of the house where I lived, and picked up the crumbs of bread that were thrown upon the ground, to carry to a nest of four young robins that were depending upon his care in a neighboring orchard. One morning, after a pleasant interview with this bird, my pen refused to write any thing particularly sober and serious, until it had strung together some rhymes about this robin. These rhymes were afterward published in my "Youth's Cabinet," with some pretty music which Mr. Bradbury wrote for them. Suppose we hunt them up, and see if they are worth reading.

THE BOY AND THE ROBIN.

I.

So now, pretty robin, you've come to my door;
I wonder you never have ventured before.
You fear'd, I suppose, we should do you some harm,
But pray, sir, what cause could there be for alarm?

II.

You seem to be timid—I'd like to know why.—
I never have hurt you. What makes you so shy?
You shrewd little rogue, I've a mind, ere you go,
To tell you a thing it concerns you to know.

III.

You think I have never discovered your nest ;
'Tis hid pretty snugly, it must be confessed.
Ha! ha! how the boughs are entwined all around !
No wonder you thought it would never be found.

IV.

You're as cunning a robin as ever I knew ;
And yet, ha! ha! ha! I'm as cunning as you!
I know all about your nice home on the tree—
'Twas nonsense to try to conceal it from me.

V.

I know—for but yesterday I was your guest—
How many young robins there are in your nest ;
And pardon me, sir, if I venture to say,
They've had not a morsel of dinner to-day.

VI.

But you look very sad, pretty robin, I see,
As you glance o'er the meadow, to yonder green tree ;
I fear I have thoughtlessly given you pain,
And I will not prattle so lightly again.

VII.


Go home, where your mate and your little ones dwell ;
Though I know where they are, yet I never will tell ;
Nobody shall injure that leaf-covered nest,
For sacred to me is the place of your rest.

VIII.

Adieu! for you want to be flying away,
And it would be cruel to ask you to stay;
But come in the morning, come early, and sing,
For dearly I love you, sweet warbler of spring.



The Goose.



EVERY body knows that the goose has been set down as an uncommonly stupid bird. There may be some reason for the general opinion. I never thought the race to which he belongs very remarkable for their intelligence. To tell the honest truth, when I have seen a flock of these fowls running toward some supposed enemy—a horse or a dog for instance—stretching out their long necks to their utmost limit, and hissing with all their might, so as to scare the foe, and induce him to take to his heels,—when I have seen all this, I have laughed a little at their stupidity. But I rather suspect that the family have been slandered a little. I cannot quite believe that a goose, in going through a barn-door, under the great beam, which is high enough to admit a load of hay, will uniformly stoop

down, for fear her head will hit the beam. I cannot believe that is true of the family generally, though, for aught that I know, it may have been true of one individual. After all, I feel inclined to take the goose's part. Some of the anecdotes which I am going to tell you, seem to afford pretty good evidence that the goose family are smarter than many people dream of.

Mr. Platt, a respectable farmer on Long Island, being out shooting in one of the bays, which, in that part of the country, abound with water-fowl, wounded a wild goose. Being wing-tipped, and unable to fly, he caught it, and brought it home alive. It proved to be a female; and, turning it into his yard, with a flock of tame geese, it soon became quite tame and familiar, and in a little time its wounded wing entirely healed. In the following spring, when the wild geese emigrated to the northward, a flock passed over Mr. Platt's barn-yard; and, just at that moment, their leader happening to sound his bugle note, our goose, remembering the well-known sound, spread its wings, mounted into the air, joined the travelers, and soon disappeared. In the succeeding autumn, the wild geese, as was usual, returned from the northward in great numbers, to pass the winter



WILD GEESE.

in our bays and rivers. Mr. Platt happened to be standing in his yard, when a flock passed directly over his barn. At that instant he observed three geese separate themselves from the rest, and, after wheeling round several times, they alighted in the middle of the yard. Imagine his surprise and pleasure, when, by certain well-remembered signs, he recognized in one of the three his long-lost fugitive. It was she indeed! She had traveled many hundred miles to the lakes, had there hatched and reared her offspring, and had now returned with her little family, to share with them the sweets of civilized life.

A farmer states that he once had a gander who was worsted in a battle with one of his neighbors, and very badly treated. The farmer, however, took the part of the one who was conquered, and nursed him until his wounds were healed. The gander was so grateful for this sympathy and kindness, that he became very much attached to his master—so much attached, indeed, that he was at times quite troublesome. One day, when the farmer was going to visit a forest more than a mile from the house, the gander insisted on going with him. In spite of all his master could do, he followed him all the way, and back again. Part

of the time he was on foot, and part of the time he flew. "Sometimes he would get before me," the farmer says, "and stop at the cross-paths, to see which way I would take. We were gone from home from ten o'clock in the morning until eight in the evening; and my companion followed me through all the windings of the wood, without seeming to be at all fatigued. After this, he attended me everywhere. I was not able to go to any place, without his tracing my steps. One day, he even visited me while I was at church. At another time, as he was passing by the minister's window, he heard me talking in the room. Finding the door open, he entered, went up stairs, and when he saw me, gave a loud exclamation of joy, to the no small fright of the family." The friendship between the gander and his master continued about two years, when the fellow became so troublesome, that it was necessary to shut him up. While he was confined, he pined away, and in about a year from the time he was first separated from his master, he died.

A Canada goose became very much attached to a dog, in consequence of the dog having once saved her life, when she was attacked by a fox. This goose would sit or stand hours near the kennel of the dog, and never quit it while he

was there, except to get food. Whenever the dog barked, the goose would cackle, and run at the person she supposed the dog barked at, and try to bite him by the heels. Sometimes she would attempt to feed with the dog; but this the dog, who treated his faithful companion rather with indifference, would not suffer. The goose would not go to roost with the others at night, unless driven by main force; and when, in the morning, she was turned into the field, she would never go from the yard-gate, but sit there the whole day, in sight of the dog. At last, orders were given that she should be no longer molested, but suffered to accompany the dog as she liked. Being thus left to herself, she ran about the yard with him all the night; and, what is stranger still, and can be attested by the whole neighborhood, whenever the dog went out of the yard, and ran into the village, the goose always accompanied him, contriving to keep up with him by the assistance of her wings, and in this way, of running and flying, followed him all over the parish. While the dog was ill, the goose never quitted him day or night, not even to feed; and it was presumed that she would have starved to death, had not orders been given for a pan of corn to be set every day close to the kennel. During this

time, the goose generally sat in the kennel, and would not suffer any one to approach it, except the person who brought the dog's or her own food. When the dog died, she would still keep possession of the kennel; and, a new house-dog being introduced, which in size and color resembled that lately lost, the poor goose was unhappily deceived, and, going into the kennel as usual, the new inhabitant seized her by the throat, and killed her, before any of the family could come to her assistance.

A most amusing scene, in which several geese and a couple of foxes were the principal actors, is described by Mrs. Child, one of the most entertaining writers of her sex on this side of the Atlantic. Mrs. Child heard the story from a Quaker residing in New Jersey, to whom it was related by a friend—himself a member of the same serious sect—who was an eye-witness. Perhaps some apology is due from me, as the story has a rather more intimate relation to the fox than to the goose, for introducing it among my stories about birds. I have only to say, that when my book relating to quadrupeds went to press, I had not heard Mrs. Child's story, which is certainly a sufficient excuse for not having served it up at that time; and, for the rest—it is a capital story, and I cannot af-

ford to lose it. Pray don't ask for any better apology than this.

A Quaker gentleman—so runs the narrative of Mrs. Child—was one day in the fields, near a stream where several geese were swimming. Presently, he observed one disappear under the water, with a sudden jerk. While he looked for her to rise again, he saw a fox come to the surface, with the goose in his mouth, and swimming quickly to the shore, the sly fellow trotted off with his prey to the woods. He happened to go in a direction where it was easy for the man to watch his movements. He carried his burden to a recess under an overhanging rock. Here he scratched away a mass of dry leaves, scooped a hole, hid his treasure in it, and covered it up very carefully. Then off he went to the stream again, entered some distance behind the flock of geese, and floated along, without any noise, with merely the tip of his nose visible above the surface of the water. But this time the fellow, shrewd and cautious as he was, did not succeed in making another capture. The geese, in some way or other, took the alarm, and flew away, cackling, as a goose will in such circumstances, at the top of their voices. The fox, as soon as he found that his scheme had failed, made his way to the shore,

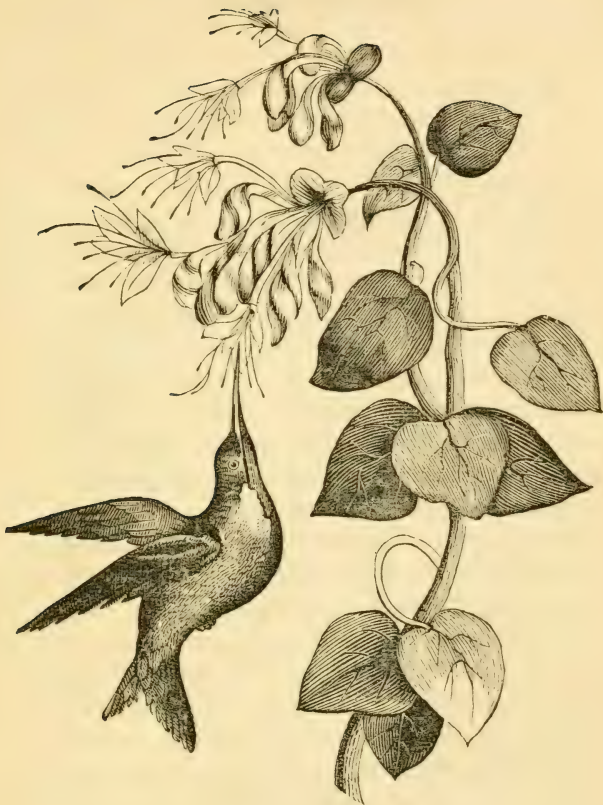
and walked off in a direction opposite to the place where his victim was buried. The man went to the hole, uncovered the goose, put it into his basket, replaced the leaves carefully, and walked away to a place sufficiently near to enable him to see what might be going on in that quarter, and yet so sheltered that the fox would not be likely to discover him. The sly thief was soon seen returning with another fox, whom he had invited to dine with him. They trotted along right merrily, swinging their tails, snuffing the air, and smacking their lips, in the hope of soon enjoying one of their favorite dishes. Alas, what a disappointment awaited them! When they arrived under the rock, the fox who had captured the goose, eagerly scratched away the leaves, when it was sufficiently evident to both parties that there was no dinner to be had in that quarter. The host looked at his companion, and plainly saw by his countenance that he was inclined to doubt whether the whole affair was not a cheat. He made up his mind, at last—so it would seem—that his friend's hospitality was a sham, and that it was a trick to insult him. The other fox could not say much in his defence. The evidence was all against him. He held his head down, looking sideways, with a sneaking glance, at his disap-

pointed companion. The indignant guest could not let the matter rest so. He seized his unfortunate host, and cuffed him most severely. Poor Reynard bore the whipping with the utmost patience, as if he was conscious that he had received no more than could be expected under the circumstances.

A friend of mine whom I met in the city of Washington some two years since, and who is a very close observer of the lower animals, related to me the following anecdote: "Six or eight years ago," said he, "I was passing the mouth of an alley leading into a vacant lot, when my attention was drawn to a group of very young children laughing vociferously. I entered the alley, to see the cause of their mirth, and soon ascertained it to be a large white goose, with a strip of narrow tin bent into a hoop, and thrown over the head of the fowl, by one of the urchins. The poor goose seemed much annoyed by the shining necklace, and ran about in every direction trying to shake it off. I found that it was the sight of these antics which had so much amused the little ragged juveniles. I stopped to see if the goose would unyoke herself; and while watching her, I observed some ducks in another part of the yard; and very soon a drake from

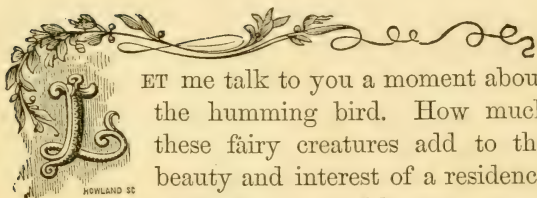
among them made a great quacking, and started off toward the embarrassed goose. When near, the latter stretched her neck out horizontally, and to my very great astonishment and admiration, the drake seized the lower part of the tin collar in his beak, the goose withdrew her head from it, and the drake immediately dropped it upon the ground; when the air rang with the plaudits of the children and the gabbling of the fowls."

It seems that there is a very close resemblance between the tongues of geese and delicate human fingers. Some wag in England—as we learn from a London exchange paper—recently took advantage of this fact, which is not very generally known, to play a trick upon the police in the place where he lived. He dropped the tongues of two geese in the shop of a cheese-dealer. They were picked up and handed over to the police, the whole force of which were immediately on the alert to get to the bottom of the mystery. All the medical men of the district were consulted, and they all agreed that the tongues were the fingers of a young female who had not been accustomed to labor. At length a postman, who was a little wiser in this matter than the rest, pointed out the mistake.



THE HUMMING BIRD.

The Humming Bird.



LET me talk to you a moment about the humming bird. How much these fairy creatures add to the beauty and interest of a residence in the country. I have seen one, many a time, poised in the air, with his long bill for a moment in the corolla of some flower, and then, in an instant, almost, flitting away with astonishing rapidity, to extract the sweets from another flower. Once I saw one fly through the window of a house into the room where I was sitting. He was terribly frightened, though. He evidently had mistaken his way, and was glad when he found himself again in the garden among his favorite roses and morning-glories.

There are a great many different varieties of this beautiful bird. The one which is rep-

resented in the engraving, is, perhaps, more common in the United States than any other. The anecdotes, however, which are told of the family, relate to different members of it.

A lady, with whom I have not the pleasure of an acquaintance, but who has made me her debtor, by the pretty stories she has sent me, to help entertain my juvenile friends, gives a description of a humming bird, which I must introduce among these anecdotes. "I had the story," the lady says, "from uncle Peter, who, by the way, is a veteran of seventy-six, and as fine a specimen of humanity as this world ordinarily produces. As my uncle was one day working in his garden, a little humming bird was darting from flower to flower, sipping the honey, when a cat suddenly sprang from a secret lurking-place, and brought the little bird to the ground. He immediately rescued it from her grasp, and carried it to the house, panting and half dead with fright, and put it in a close room. He returned after a short absence, intending to give it liberty, but his little prisoner was missing. He searched for it in vain. After two or three days, hearing a noise among some papers upon a shelf in the room, he examined them, and, to his great surprise, found his little bird, almost famished. He imme-

diately filled a small vial with sugar and water, and fed it. It soon learned to help itself from the vial, which the old gentleman kept suspended from a button-hole of his coat. It manifested the greatest affection for its benefactor, and would perch upon his hat, shoulder, or extended finger, without fear. As soon as it recovered sufficient strength, he opened the door and set it at liberty. But it did not forget its kind friend; it would return to him frequently through the day. The old gentleman was in the habit of retiring up stairs after dinner, to take his *siesta*. The little bird would go from room to room, in search of him, and not finding him below, would go up stairs, and continue its search until it found him. After making its meal from the vial, it would perch upon its protector, wipe its bill, and after resting awhile, fly off to the fields. This intimacy continued unabated for some time; but the cat at last put an end to it by making a meal of the little bird. Uncle Peter heaved a sigh, as he related the sad end of his little favorite."

Somewhere, in the course of my reading, I once found a story of a family of humming birds which a man captured when they were quite young, and which became remarkably tame.

There were two of them in the nest, when it was discovered. Humming birds never lay but two eggs at a time, I believe. The nest was found in a shed, near the house. The young birds were placed in a cage at the chamber window, and the father and mother used to come and bring food for the little ones every hour in the day. By and by, the little birds got so tame that they would alight on the gentleman's hand, when he let them out of the cage and called them. In this manner they lived with their master six months. But one night the rats found their way into the cage, and they soon made an end of the pretty humming birds.

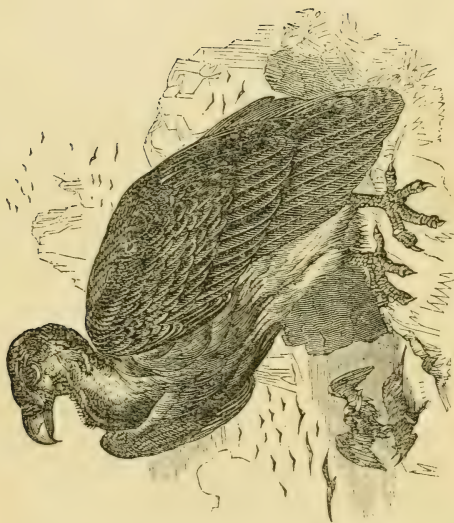
A gentleman of veracity who recently collected a number of different specimens of the humming bird in Mexico, tells an interesting story about the manner in which birds, belonging to one of the smallest of this family, were in the habit of catching the flies that had got entangled in a spider's web. "The house I resided in for several weeks," he says, "was only a story high, enclosing, like most of the Spanish houses, a small garden in the centre, the roof projecting some six or seven feet from the walls, covering a walk all round, and having a small space only between the tiles and

the trees which grew in the centre. From the edges of these tiles to the branches of the trees in the garden, multitudes of spiders had spread their webs, so closely and compactly that they resembled one vast net. I frequently watched, with much amusement, the cautious manœuvres of the humming birds, who, advancing under the web, entered the various cells in search of flies. As the larger spiders did not tamely surrender their prey, the thief was often compelled to retreat. Being within a few feet of the parties, I could notice distinctly all they did. The active little bird generally passed once or twice round the court, as if to reconnoitre his ground, and then commenced his attacks by going carefully under the nets of the wily insect, and seizing, by surprise, the smallest or feeblest of the flies that were entangled in the web. In ascending the traps of the spider, great care and skill were required. Sometimes he had scarcely room for his little wings to perform their office, and the least deviation would have entangled him in the machinery of the web, and caused his ruin. It was only the works of the smaller spider that he dare attack, as the largest rose to the defence of their citadels, when the cunning enemy would shoot off like a sunbeam, and

could only be traced by his shining colors. The bird usually spent about ten minutes at a time, in this enterprise, after which he would always alight on a tree near by, and rest himself awhile."

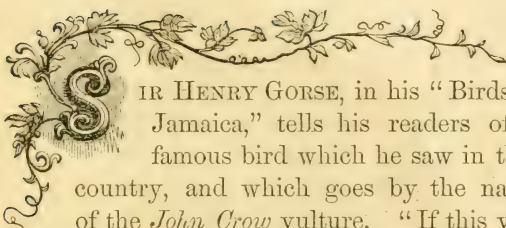
There is a little allegory about the humming bird, written by—I know not whom, which conveys some valuable instruction. It will not be difficult for you to get hold of the moral of it, I think:

A Humming Bird met a Butterfly, and being pleased with the beauty of its person, and the glory of its wings, made an offer of perpetual friendship. "I cannot think of it," was the reply, "as you once spurned me, and called me a crawling dolt." "Impossible!" exclaimed the Humming Bird, "I always entertained the highest respect for such beautiful creatures as you." "Perhaps you do now," said the other, "but when you insulted me, I was a caterpillar. So let me give you a piece of advice: never insult the humble, as they may some day become your superiors."



THE VULTURE

The Vulture.



SIR HENRY GORSE, in his "Birds of Jamaica," tells his readers of a famous bird which he saw in that country, and which goes by the name of the *John Crow* vulture. "If this vulture finds a young pig," says Sir Henry, "that has strayed away from its mother, he will come down, seize it with his beak, and endeavor to drag it away. But if the little helpless fellow's cries alarm its mother, he will give it such a wound, before she can come to the spot, that it will soon die, in which case he is sure of it, as he can take it off some other time, at his leisure. He will attack cattle, when they are sick, and hasten their death. One of Mr. Hill's servants once saw a living dog partly devoured by one. The dogs of the negroes, half-starved at home, 'bony, and gaunt, and grim,' if they

discover carrion, will gorge themselves until they can hardly stir, when they lie down and sleep. A large dog, thus gorged, was sleeping under a tree, when a John Crow descended upon him, perhaps attracted by the smell of the carrion which the dog had been devouring, and began tearing the muscles of the thigh. It actually laid open a considerable space before the poor animal was aroused by the pain, and started up with a howl of agony. The wound was dressed, but the dog soon died.”

Vultures often follow hunters, in their excursions after wild beasts. They hover at a little distance; and when they see the beast flayed and abandoned, they call out to each other, pour down on the carcass, and, in an instant, pick its bones as bare and clean as if they had been scraped by a knife.

At the Cape of Good Hope, in Africa, they seem to display still greater dexterity in their methods of carving. “I have,” says Kolben, been often a spectator of the manner in which they have anatomized a dead body—I say anatomized, for no artist in the world could have done it more neatly. They have a wonderful method of separating the flesh from the bones, and yet leaving the skin quite entire. Upon coming near the carcass, it would not be

supposed to be thus deprived of its internal substance, till it was examined more closely; and then, literally speaking, it is found to consist of nothing but skin and bone. It often happens that an ox, returning home alone to his stall from the plough, lies down by the way; and then, if the vultures perceive him, they fall with fury upon him and inevitably devour him. They sometimes attack cattle when grazing in the fields, and, to the number of a hundred or more, make their onset all at once."

They are most disgusting creatures. Their sloth, filth, and voraciousness, almost exceed credibility. In Brazil, where they are found in great abundance, when they alight upon a carcass, which they have liberty to tear at their ease, they so gorge themselves that they are unable to fly, but keep hopping along when they are pursued. At all times, they are slow of flight, and unable readily to raise themselves from the ground; but when they have overfed, they are utterly helpless. There are great flocks of them in the neighborhood of Grand Cairo, which no person is permitted to destroy. The service they render the inhabitants is the devouring all the carrion and filth of that great city, which might otherwise tend very greatly to corrupt the air. They are commonly seen

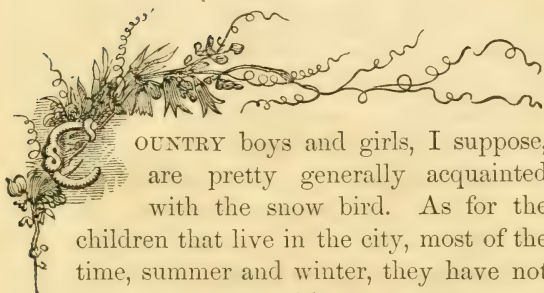
tearing a carcass very deliberately, in company with the wild dogs of the country. This odd association produces no quarrels; nothing but harmony subsists between the birds and quadrupeds.





FEEDING THE BIRDS

The Snow Bird.



COUNTRY boys and girls, I suppose, are pretty generally acquainted with the snow bird. As for the children that live in the city, most of the time, summer and winter, they have not so many opportunities to get a peep at Bird Land. I know a little girl, who makes it a part of her business, every winter, when the snow is deep and the weather is cold, to feed the little snow birds that come to her door. Her mother told me that it was her daughter's custom to feed them regularly, every morning. I was surprised when I heard how tame these little fellows had become. Why, they did not seem to be any more afraid of her than the chickens were. They came up close to her feet, to pick up the crumbs. I wonder if this little girl was not a great deal happier seeing

these birds eat the breakfast which she gave them; than she would have been to see the little fellows through the bars of a cage.

Another little girl that I read of the other day was in the habit of doing the same thing. She was kind to the birds in the winter, and gave them good things to eat. Her father was rich, but he was a miser. He was not kind to the poor. One day the little girl gathered all the crumbs she could find, and was going to carry them out and scatter them on the snow. Her father saw her, and asked her what she was going to do. She told him, and he said, "What good will it do? The crumbs will not be enough to feed one in a hundred of the birds." "I know it, dear father," said she, "but I shall be glad to save even one in a hundred of them, if I cannot save them all." The father thought a moment; he knew that many poor persons were suffering in his village, and he had refused to help any, because he could not help them all. His conscience struck him, and he told his little daughter to break a loaf of bread into crumbs for the birds, while he went to scatter a purse of money among the poor villagers.

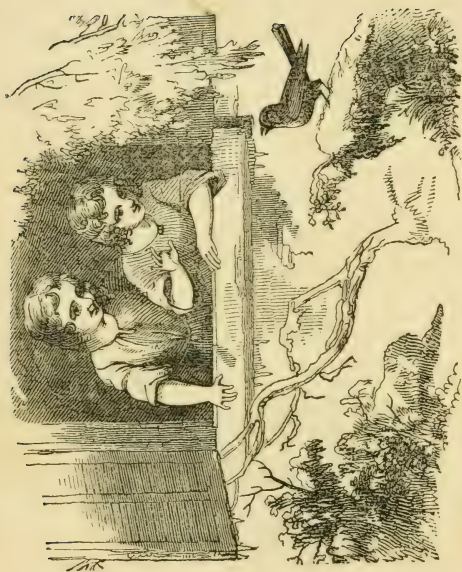
It seems that the snow bird is a very affectionate little creature. Some years ago, one of

them flew into a house, where, finding itself quite welcome, it remained over night. By accident, however, it was killed; and in the morning, one of the servants threw it into the yard. In the course of the day, one of the family witnessed a most affecting scene in connection with the dead body. Its mate was standing beside it, mourning its loss. It placed its bill below the head of its companion, raised it up, and again warbled its song of mourning. By and by, it flew away, and returned with a grain or two of wheat, which it dropped before its dead partner. Then it fluttered its wings, and endeavored to call the attention of the dead bird to the food. Again it flew away, again it returned, and used the same efforts as before. At last it took up a kernel of the wheat, and dropped it into the mouth of the dead bird. This was repeated several times. Then the poor bereaved one sang in the same plaintive strain as before. But the scene was too affecting for the lady who witnessed it. She could bear the sight no longer, and turned away. I always loved the snow bird; but I have loved him more than ever since I heard this story.

By the way, did you ever read my "Song of the Snow Bird?" Though it was made for children rather younger than you are, perhaps,

I think you will not consider it altogether too childish for you. You must know that one species of the snow bird, sometimes called the *black cap*, sings rather a pleasant strain, embracing only a few notes, however, which sounds something like the chorus in my song. Indeed, he is sometimes familiarly called the *Chickadee*.





THE SISTERS AND THE SNOW BIRD.

SONG OF THE SNOW BIRD.



The ground was all cov - er'd with



snow one day, And two lit - tle sis - ters were



bus - y at play, When a snow bird was sit - ting close



by on a tree, And mer - ri - ly sing - ing his



chick - a - de - de. Chick - a - de - de, chick - a - de - de, And



mer - ri - ly sing - ing his chick - a - de - de.

I.

The ground was all cover'd with snow one day,
And two little sisters were busy at play,
When a snow bird was sitting close by on a tree,
And merrily singing his chick-a-de-de.

Chick-a-de-de, chick-a-de-de,
And merrily singing his chick-a-de-de.

II.

He had not been singing that tune very long,
Ere Emily heard him, so loud was his song.—
“O sister! look out of the window,” said she;
“Here’s a dear little bird, singing chick-a-de-de.

Chick-a-de-de, &c.

III.

“Poor fellow! he walks in the snow and the sleet,
And has neither stockings nor shoes on his feet:
I pity him so! how cold he must be!
And yet he keeps singing his chick-a-de-de.

Chick-a-de-de, &c.

IV.

“If I were a barefooted snow bird, I know
I would not stay out in the cold and the snow.—
I wonder what makes him so full of his glee;
He’s all the time singing that chick-a-de-de.

Chick-a-de-de, &c.

V.

“O mother! do get him some stockings and shoes,
And a nice little frock, and a hat, if he choose;
I wish he'd come into the parlor, and see
How warm we would make him, poor chick-a-de-de.”
Chick-a-de-de, &c.

VI.

The bird had flown down for some pieces of bread,
And heard every word little Emily said;
“How queer I would look in that dress!” thought he;
And he laughed, as he warbled his chick-a-de-de.
Chick-a-de-de, &c.

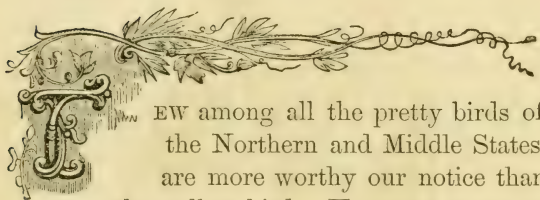
VII.

“I'm grateful,” he said, “for the wish you express,
But I've no occasion for such a fine dress;
I would rather remain with my limbs all free,
Than to hobble about, singing chick-a-de-de.
Chick-a-de-de, &c.”

VIII.

“There is ONE, my dear child, tho' I cannot tell who,
Has clothed me already, and warm enough too.—
Good morning! O who are so happy as we?”
And away he went, singing his chick-a-de-de.
Chick-a-de-de, &c.

The Goldfinch, or Yellow Bird.



EW among all the pretty birds of the Northern and Middle States, are more worthy our notice than the yellow bird. He comes to see us early in the spring, and during the entire warm weather, even until late in the autumn, you may hear his cheerful notes. Have you ever noticed how fond these birds are of the seeds of the lettuce and thistle? It is not uncommon, in the fall of the year, to see a large company of them picking the down from the thistles, so as to get the seed that lies at the base of this down. It is pleasant to see them engaged in harvesting thistle-seeds. How they make the down fly in clouds around them.

The male yellow bird has one dress for summer, and another for winter. In the month of September, the beautiful yellow gradually



THE YELLOW BIRD.

changes to a brown olive, and the male and female are then nearly alike. But in the month of May, and perhaps a little earlier, the male resumes his gay summer dress.

Yellow birds build a very neat and delicate little nest. It is frequently fastened to the twigs of an apple-tree, and sometimes to the strong, branching stalks of hemp. It is covered on the outside with pieces of moss or lichen, which they find on the trees and fences. These they glue together with their saliva. Afterward they line the inside with the softest down they can procure.

The goldfinch of this country is not precisely the same bird which goes by this name in England, though the two are much alike in their appearance and in their song. All the birds belonging to this general group are easily trained, and, with sufficient skill and patience, they may be taught to perform most astonishing feats. Mr. Syme, in his "History of British Song Birds," speaking of a man who, some years since, had a great number of small birds under his training, relates that one of his goldfinches had been taught to feign death. He appeared to be entirely lifeless, and was held up by the tail or claw, without showing any signs of life. A second stood on his head, with his

claws in the air; a third imitated a Dutch milk maid going to market, with pails on her shoulders; a fourth mimicked a Venetian girl, looking out of a window; a fifth appeared as a soldier, and mounted guard as a sentinel; and the sixth acted as a cannonier, with a cap on his head, a musket on his shoulder, and a match in his claw, with which he discharged a small cannon. The same bird also acted as if he had been wounded, and was carried in a wheelbarrow to the hospital, after which—the imaginary cure having been performed—he flew away before the company.

I have known a yellow bird confined in a cage, who, whenever he wanted to eat or drink, would draw up a little wagon, running on an inclined plane outside of his cage, his food and water being placed in the wagon, which would return of itself to the foot of the plane, when the bird let go of the cord that was attached to it.

A friend of mine writes me that she heard an interesting story of a yellow bird last summer, while visiting with an acquaintance in Oswego. "Near the dwelling where I was visiting," she says, "was a nest of unfledged yellow birds. The children put a canary cage in the tree, and in it placed the nest, so that the mother bird could still provide for her helpless



THE PRISONED YELLOW BIRD.

family, which she continued to do. When the birds were getting large enough to fly, they were placed in the hall of the house, and the door left open through the day; and here the mother continued to come and feed them, until cold weather forced the family to close the door. The birds were still kept in the cage, and the next season what was their surprise, to see the same bird return, and as she was wont to do, bring them food, not having, as is usual, forgotten her progeny."

My little friend, I know you are interested in this bird. I will not do you so much injustice as to doubt that you love him, and that you are delighted with his cheerful notes. Well, then, you are doubtless prepared to listen to some words which I have ventured to put into his mouth, and which, I frankly confess, one does not often hear in his usual, every-day, out-of-door song:

THE YELLOW BIRD'S COMPLAINT.

I.

A Yellow Bird complained one day
That he was not contented—
That, though he sang a cheerful lay,
His fate he oft lamented.

II.

His loving mistress, Mary Jane,
Was at the time so near him,
That she could hear the Bird complain.—
He meant that she should hear him.

III.

“Why, Frank,” she said, “’tis strange indeed!
You are my dearest treasure;
I give you every thing you need,
I always do, with pleasure.

IV.

“You have a splendid palace here;
You’re rich as Julius Cæsar.—
This whining, then, ’tis very clear,
Is quite unkind to me, sir.

V.

“What is it that disturbs you so?
Why sing you thus so sadly?
What can I do? Pray let me know;
I’d do it for you gladly.”

VI.

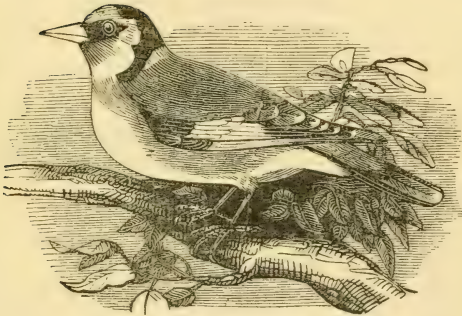
In tender tones, the Bird replied,
“Those words, dear lady, grieve me;
I never once your love denied;
I feel it all, believe me.

VII.

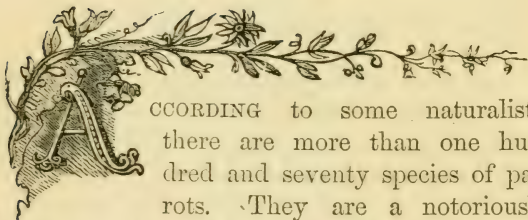
"I thank you for your tenderness,
And for this lordly dwelling;
Yet blame me not that keen distress
Within my breast is swelling.

VIII.

"One thing alone, my mistress dear—
Since you demand a reason—
Robs me of all my pleasure here—
My *palace* is my *prison*."



The Parrot.



ACCORDING to some naturalists, there are more than one hundred and seventy species of parrots. They are a notoriously noisy set, the whole race of them. I never took a very great fancy to them; and I think it quite likely that, if I had done so in early days, I should have been quite cured of my fondness by this time. Some years ago, there lived on the opposite side of the street from the house where I resided in the city, a young lady, who seemed to have been remarkably fond of pets. She always had more or less of them. There was no harm in that, you all say. No, that is true enough. But the worst of it was, this lady always contrived to have the noisiest kind of pets. Every thing she petted, for some reason or other, made a



THE PARROT.

hideous noise. I 'used to think she tried to teach these creatures to scream and yell, because she liked such music. If so, she had a most unearthly taste, I admit. But let the reason be what it may, she always had some bird or beast that shrieked, for mere pastime, like a hyena. Sometimes it was a cat, sometimes a parrot, sometimes a little screamer of a bird whose notes were provokingly like the music produced by the filing of a saw.

But of all the favorites of this singular lady, her parrot uttered the most hideous noises; and yet, odd as it may appear, she seemed to be more deeply in love with him than with any of the rest of her favorites. My study was so near this croaker, that I was compelled to listen to him from morning till night; and he annoyed me prodigiously, I do assure you. It was quite as much as I could do, sometimes, to keep as much patience in the bank as was necessary for current expenses. Whatever love for the parrot family I might have had previous to my acquaintance with my neighbor across the way, was pretty effectually used up long enough before his death, which took place about three months after his mistress had adopted him, and which, as may be supposed, cost me no tears.

It is amusing, however, to hear some of the species of the parrot imitate other animals.

Some years since, a parrot in Boston, who had been taught to whistle as a person does when he is calling a dog, was sitting in his cage at the door of a shop. As he was whistling in this manner, a large dog happened to be passing the spot, and, imagining he heard the call of his master, turned suddenly about, and ran toward the parrot's cage. At this moment, the bird exclaimed, in a very loud tone of voice, "Get out, you brute!" The astonished dog retreated, leaving the parrot to enjoy the joke.

According to an Abyssinian historian, there was a most remarkable parrot in that country, in 1621. He was about the size of a hen. He had been taught to talk in Indian, Portuguese, and Arabic, and could speak the king's name almost as plainly as a man. Among other strange things which he was in the habit of doing, he would neigh like a horse, and imitate the mewling of a cat so exactly that nobody could tell the difference, unless he saw the parrot making the noise. He was such a wise bird, that his master was summoned to appear with him before the assembly of judges, so that they might find out the cause

of these remarkable talents. In that age of the world, you know, the belief in witchcraft was very common in many parts of the world; and some of the Abyssinians thought that this parrot's skill in imitating sounds so exactly, was in some way to be traced to the agency of evil spirits. The judges acquitted the bird, however.

Some time in the seventeenth century, there was a parrot in Brazil, who seems to have been even a greater mimic than the famous one who lived in Abyssinia. You may be aware, that the Dutch had possession of this country for some years. This parrot flourished during that time, and while Prince Maurice was at the head of the Brazilian government. The bird was celebrated for answering, like a rational creature, many of the common questions that were put to him. The prince sent for him. When he was introduced into the room where the governor and several others were sitting, he immediately exclaimed, in the Brazilian language, "What a company of white men are here!" "Who is that man?" they asked him, pointing to the prince. The parrot answered, "Some general or other." When the attendants carried him up to the prince, he asked him, through the medium of an interpreter—

for he could not speak the Brazilian language—"From what place do you come?" The parrot replied, "From Marignan." "To whom do you belong?" inquired the prince. "To a Portuguese," was the answer. "What do you do there?" the prince asked again. "I take care of chickens," said the parrot. The prince laughed, and said, "You take care of chickens!" "Yes, I do," the parrot answered, "and I know well enough how to do it." And immediately he commenced clucking, in imitation of the hen, when she wishes to call her chickens together.

There is an Eastern story of a person who taught his parrot to repeat only the words, "What doubt is there of that?" He carried it to market for sale, fixing the price at one hundred rupees?" A Mogul asked the parrot, "Are you worth a hundred rupees?" The parrot answered, "What doubt is there of that?" The Mogul was delighted, and bought the bird. He soon found out that this was all that it could say. Ashamed of his bargain, he said to himself, "I was a fool to buy this bird." The parrot exclaimed, as usual, "What doubt is there of that?"

A gentleman in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, had a canary bird, and it was a fine singer. A

parrot, in a cage, was brought by some one into the same room ; but as soon as Poll struck up her harsh notes, the other bird ceased to sing, and continued silent for a considerable time, and even until it was removed to a part of the house where the parrot could not be heard. After a while it began to sing again. The parrot was then brought into the room ; but, as before, when she uttered her cry, the canary ceased ; and was never heard to sing from that time to its death, which occurred in two or three months afterward. Let noisy children remember this.

One species is found in the southern States. Audubon describes it as a great lover of mischief. He says, " It eats or destroys almost every kind of fruit, and on this account is always an unwelcome visitor to the planter, the farmer, or the gardener. The stacks of grain put up in the fields are resorted to by these birds, which frequently cover them so entirely, that they present to the eye the same effect as if a brilliantly colored carpet had been thrown over them. They cling around the whole stack, pull out the straws, and destroy twice as much of the grain as would suffice to satisfy their hunger. They alight on apple-trees in great numbers, when the fruit is small,

and, as if through mere mischief, pluck off the apples, open them to the core, and disappointed at the sight of the seeds, which are yet unfit for their use, drop them, and seize others, till they strip the whole tree."

In a small family in the south part of Portsmouth, N. H., there was a parrot who had found a home for many years, and had become a pet of the family. A child was taken sick, and was not seen by the parrot for some days. The bird had been used to repeat her name, and in the child's absence kept repeating the name so often as to annoy the family. The child died; the repetition of the name was kept up, until one of the family took the parrot to the room where the corpse lay. The parrot turned first one side of his head and then the other, toward the corpse, apparently eyeing it, and was then taken back. He never repeated the name again. He was silent, and the next day died.


A trader in Brazil relates the following story: "A certain Brazilian woman, that lived in a village two miles distant from the island on which we resided, had a parrot which was the wonder of the place. It seemed able to comprehend whatever she said to it. As we sometimes used to pass by that woman's house,

she used to call upon us to stop, promising if we gave her a comb, or a looking-glass, that she would make her parrot sing and dance to entertain us. If we agreed to her request, as soon as she had pronounced some words to the bird, it began not only to leap and skip on the perch on which it stood, but also to talk and to whistle, and imitate the shoutings and exclamations of the Brazilians, when they prepare for battle. In brief, when it came into the woman's head to bid it sing, it sang; when she wished it to dance, it danced. But if, contrary to our promise, we refused to give the woman the little present agreed on, the parrot seemed to sympathize in her resentment, and was silent; neither could we, by any means, provoke it to move either foot or tongue."

Here is a fable from which you will learn something worth remembering, as you may, in fact, from all good fables:

"A parrot flew from his cage into a neighboring wood, where he criticized the song of the different birds around him. None of the songs he heard pleased him. He found some fault with them all. At last, the singing birds asked him if he would not be so kind as to sing a song himself. 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'I whistle, but I never sing.'"

The Blue Bird.



HE pleasing manner and social disposition of this little bird, entitle him to particular notice. He is one of the first messengers of spring. Oh, how it used to gladden my heart, as the snows of winter melted away, to hear the first notes of this sweet songster! I used to fancy that the same individuals returned to my father's orchard from year to year, and that they recognized me when I welcomed them to our dwelling.

The blue bird is generally regarded as a bird of passage. Still, I have known pairs of them appear, in the latitude of Connecticut, as early as the middle of February, when the weather was unusually warm for that season of the year. Poor fellows! when they made so early a visit, they invariably had to pay



THE BLUE BIRD.

pretty dearly for it. They were sure to encounter cold weather, and frequently severe snow-storms. I have almost cried, many a time, when I have thought of what the little creatures must suffer at such times.

The favorite spot for the nest of the blue bird is a hole in some old tree. An apple tree suits him very well; and he is more generally found in an apple orchard, than anywhere else. It is to be presumed that these birds do not themselves bore the holes in the tree where they build their nest. I am inclined to think, that those with whom I was acquainted, when I was a little boy, appropriated the holes formerly made by the woodpecker. After the nest is built, the owners are sometimes obliged to abandon it to other birds. The little restless, fidgety, twittering wren, for instance, loves just such a place as the blue bird does; and I have known the sly fellow come along just as the blue bird family had got settled, and, watching an opportunity when the blue birds were away—perhaps calling on some neighbors—enter the hole, pull the nest all to pieces, and carry off the timber to build his own nest. The provoking fellow! I have had a good mind to stone him, more than once, while this mischief was going on. The wren

is no favorite of mine; he is so unamiable and ill-tempered.

The blue bird lays five and sometimes six eggs, of a pale blue color. I have known boys steal the eggs of this charming bird; but I never had the heart to do it. Moreover, I always had a very low opinion of a boy who would do such a thing; and I think now as I thought then, that any boy or girl who takes pleasure in robbing the nests of innocent birds, exhibits a cruel disposition; and I am always afraid that this disposition will show itself in their conduct toward mankind, as well as in their conduct toward birds.

The principal food of these birds is insects, particularly large beetles, and worms, such as usually abound in the heart of trees partially decayed. Spiders, too, seem to afford them a very acceptable repast. In the fall of the year they often feed on berries.

The usual spring and summer song of the blue bird, as most of my readers know, is a soft, agreeable, and oft-repeated warble. He is a remarkably good neighbor. I never heard of his quarreling and fighting with other birds. Every body ought to love him. Shall I tell you, little boy—I mean you who live in the country—how you can coax a pair of them to

build their nest under your window, and wake you up in the morning with their cheerful warbling? Save a few cents of the money that you get, and then—that is, if your father or older brother cannot attend to the business—then hire some carpenter to make you a little house, one or two feet square, with holes in it. Place this miniature house on a high post near your window, or set it on the corn-house or barn. Do it early in the spring, and you may depend the blue birds will see it, and build their nest in it. If you have two or three holes in the house, and as many different partitions inside, perhaps you will have two or three families of blue birds for your tenants. What do you think of that plan, little friends? Can't you afford to build such a house, and give the blue birds the use of it? They will pay for the rent in music—my word for it. Look at my friend in the picture, sitting on the limb of his favorite tree, trying to find a good place for his nest. Look at him! See what a fine countenance he has. Do you wonder that I like him so well? “No, no,” you all say, “I like the blue bird as well as you do.” Well, build a nice little cottage for him then.

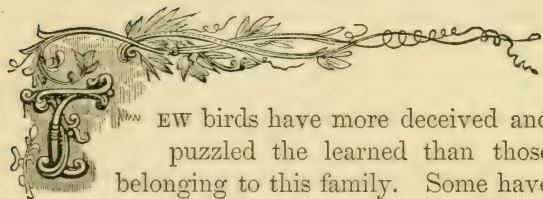
A very good friend of mine—I must not mention his name, I suppose, though I should

love to do so for the sake of my little friends—who loves the birds as well as I do myself, and who has often spent hours together, in their society, watching their movements, tells me the following anecdote: “Some years ago, after a pair of woodpeckers, who occupied a hollow tree near the house where I lived, had left their nest for the season, two beautiful blue birds came, examined the place, and liked it so well as at once to move in. A happier pair never sat on a limb. They seemed satisfied with their house, satisfied with each other, and at peace with all the world. Oh! what music they made—so soft, so sweet, and so free! One day I ventured to look in at the door, and a prettier family of little ones were never rocked in a tree. And how busy the old ones were in carrying them food! and how often did I go to leave them my best wishes for their continued prosperity. But as storms sometimes spring from the clearest skies, so sorrows rise in the happiest families. A wren came—a little, inquisitive, uneasy, noisy fellow—and in he bolted, without knocking. The old ones were from home—perhaps gone to get their little ones some supper. And what should that cruel wren do? I always loved the whole race of wrens before, so full of glee

they all are, darting from the wall to the wood-shed, and from the shed to the cider-mill. They seemed so pretty, with their little bodkin bills, and their wings rounded off like pin-cushions. But what should that wren do? It was years ago, and it took me a long time and a hard struggle to forgive him, for it almost broke my heart. Do! he took each of those innocent birds, knocked it on the head, and tumbled it out on the ground! And when the old ones returned,

“Sad was the home so joyous before;
They mourned for their little ones long;
Often and often they entered their door,
But cheered it no more with a song.”

The Bird of Paradise.



FEW birds have more deceived and puzzled the learned than those belonging to this family. Some have described the bird of Paradise as an inhabitant of the air, living only upon the dew of heaven, and never coming down to earth. Others have acquiesced in the latter part of its history, but have represented it as feeding on flying insects. Some have asserted that it was without feet, and others have ranked it among the birds of prey.

The great beauty of this bird's plumage, and the deformity of its legs, seem to have given rise to most of these erroneous reports. The savages of the Molucca Islands, of which it is an inhabitant, perceiving the inclination the Europeans had for this beautiful bird, carefully cut off its legs before they brought it to mar-



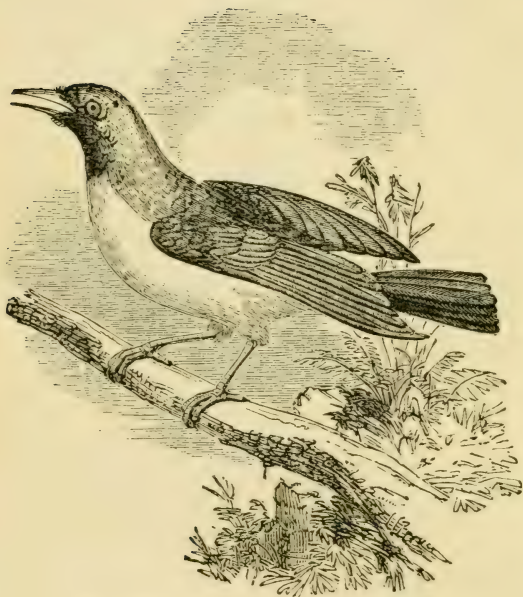
THE GREAT BIRD OF PARADISE—MALE.

ket. Thus concealing its greatest deformity, they considered themselves entitled to rise in their demands, when they offered it for sale. One deceit led to another. The buyer, finding the bird without legs, naturally inquired after them; and the seller as naturally began to assert that it had none. Thus far the European was imposed upon by others; in all the rest he imposed upon himself. Seeing so beautiful a bird without legs, he concluded that it could live only in the air, where legs were unnecessary. The extraordinary splendor of its plumage assisted this deception; and as it had heavenly beauty, so it was asserted to have a heavenly residence. Hence its name, and all the false reports that have been made concerning it.

Error, however, is short-lived, and time has discovered, that this bird not only has legs, but very large, strong ones, for its size. Soon after the discovery was made, this harmless bird was branded with the character of being rapacious, of destroying all birds of smaller size, and, from the amazing rapidity of its flight, as well qualified for a vast deal of mischief. The real history of this pretty animal is at present tolerably well known; and it is found to be as harmless as it is beautiful.

There are several species of the bird of Paradise. The one which is represented in this engraving is called the *Great Bird of Paradise*. It is extremely beautiful, as any of my readers can judge from the picture.

This species appears to the eye as large as a pigeon, though in reality the body is not much greater than that of a thrush. The tail, which is about six inches in length, is as long as the body. The wings are large, compared with the bird's other dimensions. The head, the throat, and the neck, are of a pale gold color. The base of the bill and the side of the head and throat are surrounded by black feathers, which are as soft as velvet, and changeable like those on the neck of a black bird. The hinder part of the head is of a shining green, mixed with gold. The body and wings are chiefly covered with beautiful brown, purple, and gold feathers. The uppermost part of the tail feathers are of a pale yellow, and those under them white and longer than the former; for which reason the hinder part of the tail appears to be all white. But what chiefly excites curiosity are the two long naked feathers which you will see springing from the upper part of the rump above the tail, and which are usually about three feet long. These are



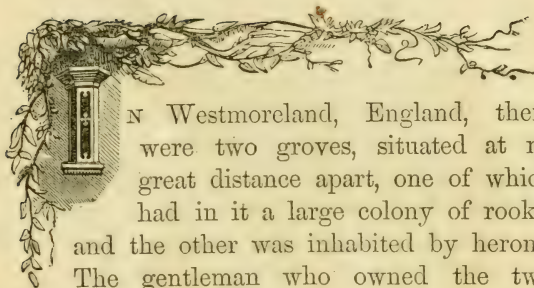
THE GREAT BIRD OF PARADISE—FEMALE.

bearded only at the beginning and the end; the whole shaft, for above two feet nine inches, being of a deep black, while the feathered extremity is of a beautiful changeable color.

The female of the bird of Paradise is by no means as beautiful as the male. Here is a picture of the female. In the delightful and spicy woods of the Molucca Islands, these beautiful creatures fly in large flocks, so that the groves which produce the richest spices produce the finest birds, also. The inhabitants themselves are perfectly aware of the great beauty of these birds, and give them the name of *God's birds*, as being superior to all others in existence. They live in large flocks, and at night generally perch upon the same tree. They fly very rapidly, and are almost continually on the wing, in pursuit of insects, which form their usual prey.

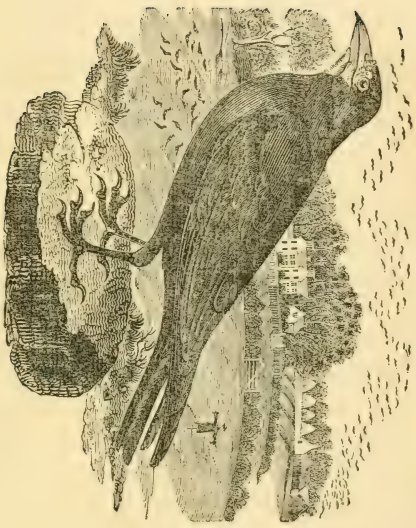
Some years ago the ladies in this country used to ornament their bonnets with the plumage of this beautiful bird.

The Rook.



IN Westmoreland, England, there were two groves, situated at no great distance apart, one of which had in it a large colony of rooks, and the other was inhabited by herons. The gentleman who owned the two groves cut down the one in which the herons lived. The poor birds, thus turned out of house and home, did much as men do sometimes, when they want more land, and cannot get it in any other way. They went to war. They said among themselves—that is, I have no doubt but they had some such conversation in their cabinet councils, though I frankly confess I never saw the records of their conversation, history being quite silent on this topic—they said among themselves, “Well, here we are without a home. We have not

THE ROCK.





got any place where we can build our nests, and raise up our families. The world owes us a living. Those rooks over there, in that grove across the brook, have got a great deal more land than they know what to do with. Besides they are not half civilized, and are not of much account any way. The boundary between the country of the rooks and the herons has never been very well defined. It is said that a great part of that grove used to belong to us, and that it was taken from us by fraud, a great many years back. We have a better right to a part of that grove than they have, and quite as good a right, for aught that we can see, to the whole of it. Suppose we go and fight for a part of the grove?" The more this proposal was talked over, the better it was liked by the council. So war was declared. The two armies fought very hard. A great many herons were killed, and a great many rooks, too. But at last, peace was declared. The terms of the agreement between the two parties were that the rooks should take one part of the grove, and the herons the other. At the last accounts, the two nations were on the best of terms. They seemed to have forgotten their old difficulties altogether.

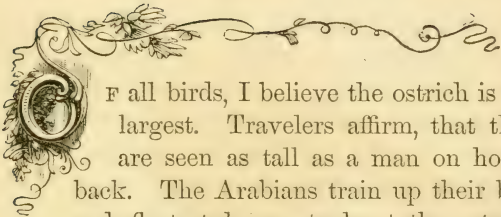
A Caernarvon (Wales) paper, relates the

following instance of summary punishment: "The rookery in front of the Uxbridge Arms Hotel, in Caernarvon, was, some six weeks ago, the scene of a most extraordinary occurrence. One morning, a solitary crow was observed advancing toward the place, and three of the feathered tenants of the said rookery sallied forth to meet the apparent stranger. The company having entered the precincts of the rookery, amid a good deal of cawing and other peculiar noises, the victim was pounced upon, and borne to a tree, where its neck was firmly fixed between two branches, and while one of the executioners stationed himself above, the others rendered assistance by suspending themselves a dead weight to the feet of the unfortunate culprit. The work was soon accomplished, as life in a few minutes became totally extinct."



THE OSTRICH.

The Ostrich.



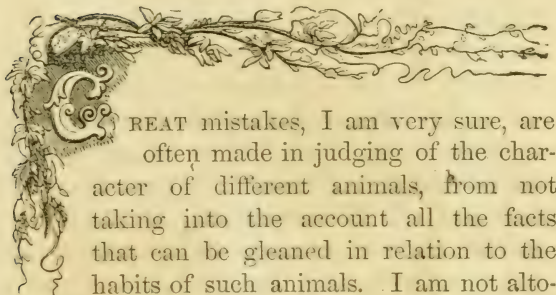
F all birds, I believe the ostrich is the largest. Travelers affirm, that they are seen as tall as a man on horseback. The Arabians train up their best and fleetest horses to hunt the ostrich. As soon as the hunter comes within sight of his prey, he puts his horse to a gentle gallop, so as to keep the ostrich still in sight, yet not so as to terrify him from the plains into the mountains. Of all known animals that make use of their legs in running, the ostrich is by far the swiftest; upon observing himself, therefore, pursued at a distance, he begins to run at first but gently, either insensible of his danger, or sure of escaping. In this situation, he somewhat resembles a man at full speed. His wings, like two arms, keep working, with a motion correspondent to that of his legs; and

his speed would very soon snatch him from the view of his pursuers; but, unfortunately for the silly creature, instead of going off in a direct line, he takes his course in circles; while the hunters still make a small course within, relieve each other, meet him at unexpected turns, and keep him thus still employed, still followed, for two or three days together. At last, spent with fatigue and famine, and finding escape impossible, he endeavors to hide himself from those enemies he cannot avoid, and covers his head in the sand, or the first thicket he meets. Sometimes, however, he attempts to face his pursuers; and, though in general the most gentle animal in nature, when driven to desperation, he defends himself with his beak, his wings, and his feet. Such is the force of his motion, that a man would be utterly unable to withstand him in the shock.

They are often ridden upon, and used like horses. Moore assures us, that at Joar he saw a man traveling upon an ostrich. There is a French factory at Podare, a small town on the southern bank of the river Niger, where, some years ago, a Frenchman saw two ostriches who belonged to some one connected with the factory. They were so tame that they allowed children to mount their backs. Two children

rode together on the back of the larger of the two birds. No sooner did the ostrich feel the weight of the burden, than he began to run as fast as possible. He carried the two boys several times round the village; and it was impossible to stop him, except by placing some obstacle in his way. This sight pleased the French gentleman so much, that he wished it to be repeated. So, to try the strength of the birds, he directed a full-grown negro to mount the back of the smaller ostrich, and two others the larger one. This burden did not seem at all to trouble the birds. At first, after they had received their load, they went off at a pretty brisk trot; but soon they expanded their wings, as if to catch the wind, and moved so swiftly that they hardly seemed to touch the ground.

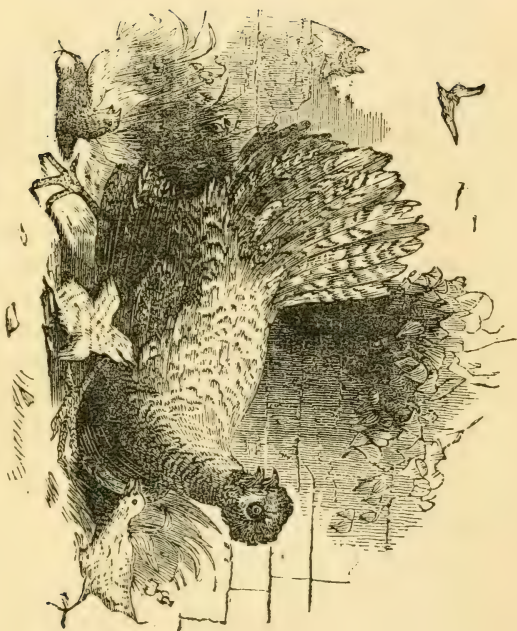
The Domestic Cock and Hen.



REAT mistakes, I am very sure, are often made in judging of the character of different animals, from not taking into the account all the facts that can be gleaned in relation to the habits of such animals. I am not altogether certain that our busy, pompous, crowing friend, the rooster, has not been misjudged and misunderstood, from the one-sided view which has been taken of him. It cannot be denied that he struts a good deal, and makes a great boast of his warlike feats, on which account he has entailed upon his race the reputation of being entirely deficient in courage. But that notion is not strictly correct. Instances have been known in which the cock has displayed considerable heroism.

Buffon states that he once saw a hen hawk

THE DOMESTIC HEN AND CHICKENS.



alight near a farm house, when a young cock, of less than a year old, instantly darted at him, and threw him on his back. In this situation, the hawk defended himself with his talons and his bill, frightening the hens and turkeys, which screamed at the top of their voice. After the hawk had recovered himself a little, he rose, and was preparing to make off with himself; but the cock rushed upon him a second time, overturned him, and held him down so long that he was caught.

One of the most barbarous sports of modern times, is that of cock-fighting. I am sorry to say that it is practiced now, to some extent, in civilized communities. Large bets are made upon two rival cocks. Artificial spurs, made of some kind of metal, are placed upon the legs of the cocks, to enable them to fight more savagely. Sometimes one of the cocks falls down dead while fighting, and cases sometimes occur in which they both die in actual combat. Such sports must have a bad influence on those who witness them, and especially on those who take a more active part in them. I should think it would almost turn people into a race of tigers, after a while. I sincerely hope that none of my readers will ever have any thing to do with cock-fighting.

The following commentary on the evils of this beastly sport, appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine for April, 1789: "Died, on the 4th day of April, John Ardesoif, Esq., a young man of large fortune, and, in the splendor of his horses and carriages, rivaled by few country gentlemen. Mr. Ardesoif was very fond of cock-fighting, and had a favorite cock, upon whom he had won many profitable bets. The last bet made upon this cock he lost, which so enraged him, that he had him tied to a spit and roasted alive, before a large fire. The screams of the miserable cock were so affecting, that some gentlemen who were present attempted to interfere. This so enraged the owner, that he seized a poker, and in the most furious manner declared that he would kill the first man who interfered. But in the midst of his passionate threats, he fell down dead upon the spot!"

The inhabitants of Sumatra fight their cocks for vast sums. A man has been known to stake his wife and children, and another his mother and sister, on the issue of a battle. A father on his death-bed, is said to have directed his son to lay out his entire property in the purchase of a certain celebrated cock.

A hen, who had reared three broods of ducks in three successive years, became so



THE DOMESTIC COCK.

much accustomed to seeing them run to the water and swim, that she ceased to be alarmed about their safety, and no longer tried to prevent them from enjoying themselves in this manner. She was even in the habit of flying to a large stone in the middle of the pond, and of quietly watching her brood as they swam around it. The fourth year she hatched her own eggs; and, finding that her chickens did not take to the water, as the ducks had done, she flew to the stone in the pond, and called them to her with a great deal of earnestness. This hen must have had a good memory, don't you think so, young friend?

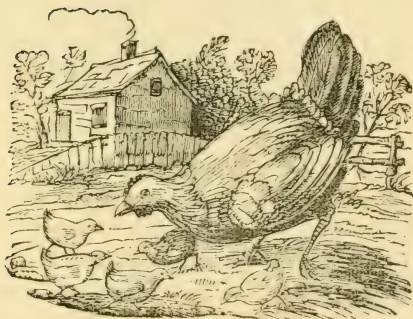
But it is time to leave off talking about this family; and I will wind off with a pretty fable furnished me by my esteemed friend and former classmate, J. P. M'Cord, of Pennsylvania.

THE TWO COCKS.

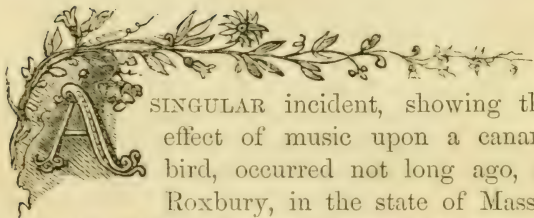
A farmer once two cocks possessed,
High-bred, and clothed in gayest vest;
Though cocks are seldom named, yet these
We now will christen Trim and Tease.
The former loved the cottage door,
Nor would the grounds beyond explore;
Content, and free from love of change,
He kept within his chosen range.

The other, too, averse to roam,
Not often wandered far from home;
He loved the barn, and wished no more
Than what was furnished by its floor.
But, on a chilly autumn morn,
The farmer filled his hand with corn,
The palate of the first to please,
And lure him to the haunt of Tease;
That while the reign of frost should hold,
He might be sheltered from the cold.
Trim, eager for the scattered grains,
Is tempted from his own domains;
He still is led along with ease,
Until the other's form he sees;
Who forward struts, with haughty air,
And seems for battle to declare.
Unwilling for the offered fight,
Trim turns at once, and takes to flight;
The tenant of the barn he shuns,
And homeward to the cottage runs.
At once a jeering speech is heard:
"How swift he flies, the coward bird!
No valiant heart would tamely yield,
Before a struggle for the field;
Nor quail before a foeman's eye,
Nor, challenged, from his presence fly."
"You judge him wrong," a voice replies;
"The ruling motive deeper lies.
What prudence dictates, may appear
The prompting of unmanly fear;
Her voice it was which bade him shun
The ills of strife ere yet begun.

That cause is better lost than gained
Which must with battle be maintained.
How strange, to poise the just and right
On th' issues of uncertain fight;
To prove the valor of the breast
By bold exposure of the crest!
Those who from scenes of strife retire,
Or who are not provoked to ire,
When others injure, threaten, rave,
Are not the timid, but the brave;
For every cock can crow and strut,
Or daub his fellows o'er with smut;
The few that bear a wrong with grace
Shine forth the noblest of the race."



The Canary Bird.



SINGULAR incident, showing the effect of music upon a canary bird, occurred not long ago, at Roxbury, in the state of Massachusetts. A lady of rare musical attainments was playing on the piano, when all at once her bird, who seemed to have been listening very intently, burst forth into a strain of song so loud, shrill, and powerful, as at once to arrest her attention. Nothing like it had been heard before. The little creature's breast seemed actually swelling and heaving with his efforts to give vent to the conception with which his tiny heart was beating. All at once, at the very full tide of his melody, he was silent. His mistress took him from the cage, and he turned over in her hand and died! On dissection, it was found that he had completely split his windpipe from top to bottom.



CANARY BIRDS AND NEST

The canary bird can be taught a great many tricks, some of which are surprising enough. I had a bird once, who was quite a cunning fellow. He used to play with me every day. When I let him go out of his cage, in the room which I occupied as a study, he would play all manner of capers. Sometimes he would be still for a long time, until, perhaps, I had almost forgotten that he was out of his cage, when he would suddenly fly from the place where he was sitting, and pass over my table, just hitting my head with his wings.

But Willy—for that was the name of this bird—had not so thorough an education as some birds of his species which I saw about a year since, at a public exhibition. These birds, with a multitude of others in the same collection, performed so many surprising feats that I must tell you something about them. I was in Baltimore, on my way to Richmond, and called, as a matter of course, on my editorial friend Mr. Reese. I had not been in his office more than fifteen minutes, when he called my attention to a regiment of trained birds which an Italian, whose name does not now occur to me, was at that time exhibiting in Baltimore. "You must go and see them," said he, "by all means." I told him that the

thing was hardly possible; that I was to leave the city in the afternoon train for Washington, and that I had sundry errands to do before I left. "Never mind the errands," said he, "you must see the birds, at any rate." Now, to tell the truth, I was half inclined to think that the exhibition was rather a dull affair. The Italian gentleman had previously spent some time in the city of New York, with his birds, and I had never been to see them. I had taken it into my head that they were hardly worth seeing. But my friend took me, almost by force, to the exhibition, where, I must confess, I soon discovered that my estimate of the performances of the birds was a very mistaken one. I cannot tell half of the wonderful things that I saw the little fellows do. It would take up a great part of my book if I should describe to you all their performances in detail.

Among all the birds, the canary was perhaps the most interesting. The gentleman who had the birds in charge would bring them out, one by one, as they were called; and they would go through their several parts on the platform. First he made a crow march out of the cage where he was kept, and a little canary bird, at the bidding of the Italian gentleman,



THE FAVORITE GALLERY.

flew from the place where he was sitting, hopped upon the back of the crow, and rode several times around the platform, the crow seeming to like the sport as well as his rider. Another canary bird stood on the barrel of a pistol, when his master discharged it, without stirring an inch at the noise. Afterward he made two or three of these birds fly through a small ring which had been suspended a few feet from the floor, the ring being surrounded with pitch, which was on fire at the time. Then he harnessed one of them up to a carriage, and made him draw it around the platform. Indeed, this gentleman had taught these little birds to perform all sorts of cunning tricks, which amused me exceedingly.

I want to find some good place in my book, to say a word about confining birds in cages; and, perhaps, as the canary bird is especially interested in this matter, there will be no better place to say it than just at this point. I do not think, my dear young friend, that it is altogether right to shut up birds in cages. It is true, as I said before, that I once had a bird myself. But while I owned him, my views about keeping birds in confinement were somewhat changed; and when little Willy died, I determined I would never keep another bird,

and I never have kept one. I know there are a great many things to be said in favor of it. It is said that all the lower animals were given to us to make us more happy, and that we are to make such use of them as will add most to our enjoyment. I admit the truth of the first part of this plea, but I do not so readily fall in with the other idea. It does not follow that, because we have liberty to *use* a thing, we are permitted to *abuse* it. Mind, I do not assert, positively, that keeping a bird in a cage, in order to enjoy his music, is abusing him. But it may be so, you see, and I am more than half convinced that it is so. It is said, too, that, in the case of very many of the birds confined in cages—the canary bird, for instance—they don't know any thing about freedom, and moreover, if they were set at liberty, such is their ignorance of all that part of the world which lies outside of their former narrow dwelling, that they would soon die of hunger, or fall into the hands of some enemy or other, who would give himself and family a dinner at their expense. That argument may do pretty well when used in relation to a bird which one has in his possession already; but it is not worth much in settling the question whether, in case he has no bird, he had better buy a

pair. It may be the part of wisdom and kindness to take care of the present generation of exotic birds. But I do not see how, on that account, we get a license either to raise young birds to be confined, or to purchase them and confine them. So much for birds which are introduced into this country from abroad. There is, of course, less excuse still for shutting up our own native birds, than there is in the case of those birds that are imported from foreign countries.

I suppose I must not stop to plead any longer for these captives. Perhaps I have already said too much on the subject. But I want you to read this touching appeal from a canary bird—an appeal, by the way, which was put into the little songster's mouth by an esteemed friend and correspondent, Miss H——, and by her furnished for my use :

THE BIRD'S COMPLAINT.

I.

I wonder what my wings were made for,
Fluttering, active, restless things!
If this cage is all of bird-land,
Tell me why a bird has wings.

II.

Nay, it can't be—He who made me
Planted, thrilling, in my breast,
Something longing, aye, for freedom,
And these wires destroy my rest.

III.

Shaking, hopping, waiting, restive,
How I long for once to fly—
How my aching pinions tremble—
Give me life, or let me die.

IV.

Yonder in a deep-green cedar,
Fair as light, and light as air,
Shouts aloud a joyous robin—
If you love me, send me there.

V.

Else what can my wings be good for?
I as well might be a mouse
As a lonesome moping prisoner,
Barred forever in the house.

VI.

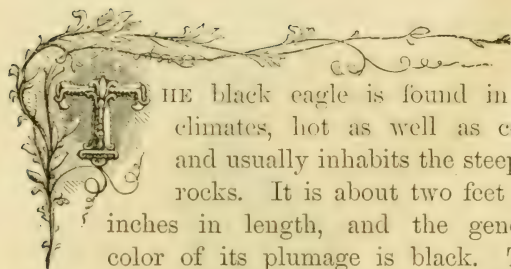
Better any thing, with freedom,
Than to know that one has wings,
And must ever keep them fettered—
Thralldom hath a thousand stings.

VII.

O, this cage! it does not fit me;
I'm not made for it, I know;
Mine is yonder azure heaven—
If you love me, let me go.



The Eagle.



THE black eagle is found in all climates, hot as well as cold, and usually inhabits the steepest rocks. It is about two feet ten inches in length, and the general color of its plumage is black. The head and upper parts of the neck, however, are mixed with yellow, while the lower part of the tail is white, with blackish spots. The bird is so powerful as to be able to kill a dog that is much larger than itself. The Abbé Spalanzani, having forced a dog into one of the apartments where he kept an eagle, the bird immediately ruffled the feathers on the head and neck, cast a dreadful look at its victim, and taking a short flight, immediately alighted on his back. It held the neck of the animal firmly with one foot, by which he was pre-



THE BLACK EAGLE.

vented from turning his head to bite, and with the other grasped one of his flanks, at the same time driving its talons into the dog's body. In this attitude the bird continued, until its victim expired, with fruitless cries and efforts. The beak, which up to this time had been unemployed, was now used for making a small hole in the skin. This was gradually enlarged; and from this the bird began to tear away and devour the flesh, and went on till it was satisfied. So much for the story. We cannot help thinking, by the way, that the abbé, who witnessed this feat, might have satisfied his curiosity in a manner rather more humane. The poor brutes have to suffer a great deal for the cause of science. No doubt they would be happier, if such a thing as science was unknown.

A man in Connecticut shot an eagle of the largest kind. The bird fell to the ground, and, being only wounded, the man carried him home alive. He took good care of him, and he soon got well. He became quite attached to the family in which he was adopted; and though he was permitted to have his liberty, and often flew away to a considerable distance from the house, he always came back again. It was his custom to take his station in the

door-yard in front of the house, and, if any well-dressed person came through the yard to the house, the eagle would sit still, and make no objections; but if a ragged person came into the door-yard, he would fly at him, seizing his clothes with one claw, and holding on to the grass with the other. In this way, he would make him a prisoner. The owner of the house was often called upon to release people who had been captured by this eagle. It is a curious fact, that the bird never attacked people, however ragged they might be, if they approached the house by the back door. It was only when they attempted to enter through the front door that he assailed them. He had some other curious habits, as, for instance, instead of going out every day in order to get his breakfast, dinner, and supper, his custom was, about once a week, to make a hearty meal, which lasted him for six or seven days. His common food was the king bird. He would sometimes catch ten of these birds, in the course of a few hours. The eagle must have been very dexterous to have done it, by the way, for the king bird is surprisingly quick in his motions, and does not make any thing of the task of catching bees by wholesale, as they are going into their hive. I watched one last

summer for half an hour, as he was making his breakfast at the expense of the bees belonging to the friend at whose house I was visiting; and it amused me not a little, although I could not help pitying the poor bees, to see the dexterity with which he made prisoners of the little fellows.

The following story is translated from the German of Ludwig Pechstein, and is narrated by an Alpine huntsman: A hunter from Mollis, when pursuing the chamois, had gone as near as possible to a dangerous spot where one of those animals was standing, and fired at her. Just as his piece was discharged, a golden eagle flew close over his head, and by the cry of the bird, the man was certain that there was a nest of young ones hard by, built among almost inaccessible precipices. The hunter, loading his piece again, and hanging it on his back, took off his shoes, clambered up the rocks, and gained possession of a hazardous foot-hold, from whence he could look into the nest and take hold of it; but he had one hand only at liberty, being obliged to hold fast on the rock with the other, in order to save himself from tumbling headlong into the giddy gulf beneath; though giddiness befalls no genuine chamois hunters, for they consider the drinking of the fresh

blood of the chamois as a specific against vertigo. Just now, however, at the very moment when the huntsman was clutching the young eagles, who were almost fledged in the nest, down flew the old one, and pounced her claws into the huntsman's collar; she then pecked at his face and head with her beak, now mangling one, and then the other. The man's situation became frightful, and he in vain endeavored with his one free hand to protect himself from the wrathful bird, who defended her young with desperate fury. He could not extricate his hand, because she was tearing away with claws and beak upon his collar and shirt. Almost powerless, he drew back from the eagle, as screaming louder and louder, and flapping her enormous wings, she dashed upon him again; and while with one hand he clung convulsively to the precipice, he so turned his fowling-piece with the other, which was at liberty, as to bring the mouth of it in the direction of the bird's body. In this fearful position he succeeded in pulling the trigger, the piece went off, and the eagle fell beside him. Streaming with blood and lacerated to torture, the huntsman must have perished had not a comrade come to his assistance, who helped him down from the precipice, bound up his wounds, and gave him some



THE SEA EAGLE.

refreshment, though the poor fellow fainted a number of times. When carried to his home, he lay in a swoon for half an hour, and passed three fourths of the ensuing year under the care of physicians and surgeons.

The following thrilling anecdote is taken from Stanley's History of Birds: A father and his two sons were out together, collecting the eggs of the eagle and other mountain birds. They attached their rope to the summit of a precipice, and went down, in this way, to engage in their usual occupation. Having collected as many eggs as they could carry, they were all three ascending by the rope—the eldest of the sons first, his brother a fathom or two below him, and the father of the two following last. They had made considerable progress, when the elder son, looking upward, perceived the strands of the rope grinding against a sharp edge of the rock, and gradually giving way. He immediately reported the alarming fact, "Will it hold together till we gain the summit?" asked the father. "It will not hold another minute," was the reply; "our triple weight is lessening it rapidly." "Will it hold one?" said the father. "It is as much as it can do," replied the son; "even that is doubtful." "There is then a possibility at least of

one of us being saved; draw your knife instantly, and cut away below!" was the cool and intrepid order of the parent. "My son, exert yourself, and you may yet escape, and live to comfort your poor mother!" There was no time for discussion or further hesitation. The son looked up once more, but the edge of the rock was cutting its way, and the rope was nearly severed. The knife was drawn, the rope was divided, and the father and brother were launched into eternity!

A woman living on the sea-shore, in New Jersey, happened to be weeding her garden, and had set her child down to amuse himself, while she was at work, when a sudden and extraordinary rushing sound and a scream from her child alarmed her. She started up, and beheld her infant thrown down and dragged some feet from the place where he had been seated, while a large eagle was rising from the ground, with a piece of the child's frock in his mouth. It seemed that the bird had seized the child by his clothes, and as these gave way, he lost his victim.

A gentleman residing on the eastern end of Long Island, says that he once saw an eagle rob a hawk of the fish which it had just taken from the water. The hawk was so enraged as to fly

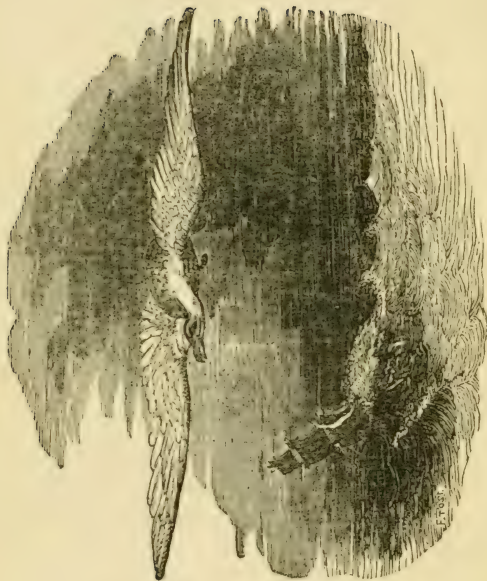
down at the eagle, when the eagle, in the air, very deliberately threw himself partly over on his back, and, while he grasped the fish with one foot, stretched out the other to threaten or seize the hawk.

The bearded eagle, or the *lammer-geyer*, as it is called by the Swiss peasants, inhabits the highest parts of the great chain of the Alps which separates Switzerland. They are very large, sometimes measuring seven or eight feet from the beak to the tip of the tail.

Mr. Bruce, who traveled extensively in Abyssinia, gives a thrilling description of an adventure he had with one of these birds. "Upon the highest top of the mountain," says he, "while my servants were refreshing themselves after the fatigue of that rugged ascent, and were eating their dinner in the open air, with several large dishes of boiled goats' flesh before them, this robber, as he turned out to be, suddenly made his appearance. He did not stoop rapidly from a height, but came flying slowly along the ground, and sat down close to the meat, within the circle the men had made around it. A great shout called me to the place. I saw the eagle stand for a moment, as if not quite certain what he had better do. While the servants ran for their lances, I walked up to within a

few feet of him. His attention was fixed upon the meat. I saw him put his foot into the pan, where there was a large piece boiling; but finding the water rather too hot for him, he let go of the piece he had caught hold of, and left the pan. There were two large pieces, a leg and a shoulder, lying upon a wooden platter. He thrust both his claws into these pieces, and carried them off. He was gone some minutes, during which time I loaded my rifle with ball, and sat down to watch him, close by the platter of meat. When he returned, he went to work to get the rest of the meat; but we all thought he had already obtained more than his share of the goat, and did not love to spare any more. So I despatched him by means of my rifle."

M. Vaillant, a French naturalist, once saw a desperate battle between an eagle and a serpent of considerable size. After repeated trials of strength on both sides, the serpent became satisfied that his enemy was the stronger, and he tried to get back to his hole. But the bird seemed to be aware of what was going on, and with one leap she placed herself between the serpent and the hole. At length, finding it was useless to try to get away, the serpent boldly erected himself, and did his best to frighten the bird. He hissed dreadfully, and



THE EAGLE LOOKING OUT FOR FISH.

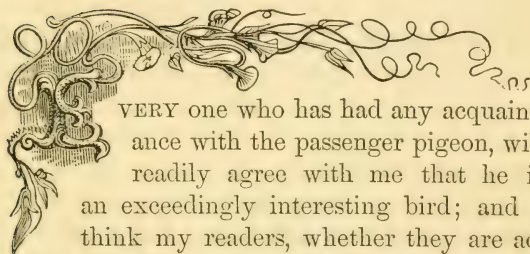
showed his inflamed eyes and swollen head. Sometimes this threatening appearance on the part of the snake seemed to have the effect intended by it. It produced a slight pause in the combat. But the eagle soon returned to the charge, and, covering her body with one of her wings, as a shield, she struck her enemy with the other. I saw him, at last, stagger and fall. The conqueror then fell upon him, and with one stroke of her beak laid open his skull."

The eagle sometimes gets the worst of it, in his attempts to prey upon other birds. Here is an instance of his defeat: "I was crossing a wide plain," says one, "when I saw a dense flock of birds, some thousands in number, migrating to the north. Soon they were in great agitation, wheeling and circling with much velocity. The precise cause of their trouble I did not at the first instant perceive. They opened to form a hollow square, or rather globe, and then closed up with a frightful clatter of wings. They suddenly spread out in every direction, when I saw an eagle among them, endeavoring to catch one for his supper. Again they went through the same manoeuvre, forming a hollow globe, with the eagle in the centre, and closing up with a still more frightful crash.

The eagle being defeated, darted away toward a distant hill, evidently happy to make his escape."

The eagle is called the king of the birds; and he is rightly named, I think, judging from the stories which have been told about him. Wilson says, "I have seen the bald eagle, while seated on the body of a dead horse, keep a whole flock of vultures at a respectful distance, until he had entirely satisfied his own appetite;" and he tells us, also, that he knew another instance of the kingly power of this bird. Many thousands of squirrels had been drowned in attempting, while emigrating, to cross the Ohio river. The vultures had a fine time of it for weeks. But the sudden appearance of the eagle among them put a stop to their feasting, and drove them to a considerable distance from the spot. The eagle held sole possession of the prey for several days, and not a vulture dare venture near him.

The Passenger Pigeon.



VERY one who has had any acquaintance with the passenger pigeon, will readily agree with me that he is an exceedingly interesting bird; and I think my readers, whether they are acquainted with him or not, will not be slow in coming to the same conclusion, when they have got through with the stories I am going to tell about the family.

An English musical composer states that he was once at the house of his friend, Mr. Lee, in Cheshire, when a fact came under his observation connected with a pigeon, which, he acknowledges, he should be slow in believing, were it related by any one else. A daughter of Mr. Lee was a fine performer on the harpsichord. While she was playing an opera of Handel's, and when she came to a song in it

called "*Speri si*," a pigeon would come down from a dove-house near by, and alight on the window of the room where she was playing. This the bird did every time the lady came to the song, and only then. As soon as the song was completed, he flew away to his dove-house again.

Mr. Bertoni, an Italian musician, had a pet pigeon who was very fond of hearing his master play on the piano-forte. As soon as the musician sat down to the instrument, and struck the keys, the bird would begin to shake his wings, perch on the instrument, and show the strongest signs of intense delight. If, however, he or any one else struck a false note, or made any discord in playing, the bird never failed to show evident signs of anger and distress. If teased too long, he would sometimes grow quite enraged, and peck the offender's fingers in such a manner as to leave no room for doubt that he was thoroughly angry. Bertoni declared that he never knew the bird's judgment fail, and that he often kept him out of the room, for fear of his offending those who came to take lessons in music.

This species of the pigeon takes its name, I suppose, from a peculiarity there is about their mode of migration. They fly in flocks of



THE PASSENGER PIGEON.

immense numbers. The stories that are told respecting the extent of these flocks could not be credited, did they not come from such men as Audubon and Wilson, who would not willingly deceive us. Mr. Brewer, the editor of the American edition of Wilson's Ornithology, gives us a detailed account of a flock which he saw in Kentucky some years since. He was near a place where the pigeons, in their journeys, were accustomed to roost for the night. It was, he says, in a portion of the forest where the trees were of great size, and where there was but little underwood. "I rode through it," says he, "upward of forty miles, and, crossing it at different points, found its average width to be rather more than three miles. Few pigeons were to be seen before sunset; but a great number of persons, with horses and wagons, guns and ammunition, had already made their camps in the vicinity, in expectation of the arrival of the pigeons. Two farmers, living more than a hundred miles distant, had driven upward of three hundred hogs to the place, to be fattened on the slaughtered birds. Here and there, the people employed in salting what had already been captured, were seen sitting in the midst of large piles of these birds. Many trees, two feet in diameter, I observed

were broken off at no great distance from the ground; and the branches of many of the largest and tallest had given way, as if the forest had been swept by a tornado. As the period of their arrival approached, their foes anxiously prepared to seize them. Some were furnished with iron pots containing sulphur, others with torches of pine knots, many with poles, and the rest with guns. The sun went down, but not a pigeon appeared. Every thing was ready, and all eyes were gazing on the clear sky, which appeared in glimpses amid the tall trees. Suddenly there burst forth a general cry, 'They are coming!' The noise which they made, while yet distant, reminded me of a hard gale at sea, passing through the rigging of a close-reefed vessel. As the birds arrived, and passed over me, I felt a current of air that surprised me. Thousands were soon knocked down by polemen. The current of birds, however, soon kept increasing. The fires were lighted; and a most magnificent, as well as terrible sight, presented itself. The pigeons, coming in by thousands, alighted everywhere, one above another, until solid masses, as large as hogsheads, were formed on every tree, in all directions. Here and there, the perches of the birds gave way, under their weight, with a

crash, and falling to the ground, destroyed hundreds of the birds beneath, forcing down the dense groups with which every stick was loaded. It was a scene of uproar and confusion. I found it quite useless to speak, or even to scream, to those persons who were within a few yards of me. Even the reports of the guns were seldom heard; and I knew of the firing only by seeing the men reloading their guns. The picking up of the dead and wounded was left for the next morning's task. The birds kept constantly coming; and it was past midnight before I perceived any decrease in the numbers that arrived. The uproar continued, indeed, all night. As I was anxious to know to what distance the sound reached, I sent off a man to travel for the purpose in different directions about the forest. When he returned, he informed me that he heard the noise distinctly when three miles from the spot. Toward the approach of day, the noise rather subsided; but long before sunrise the pigeons began to move off in a direction quite different from that in which they had arrived the evening before. At sunrise, all that were able to fly had disappeared. The howlings of the wolves now reached our ears; and the foxes, lynxes, bears, raccoons, and opossums, were seen sneaking off

from the spot, while eagles and hawks, of different species, accompanied by a crowd of vultures, came to enjoy their share of the spoil. It was then that the authors of all this mischief began their entry among the dead and dying. The pigeons were picked up and piled in heaps, until each had as many as he could possibly dispose of, when the hogs were let loose to feed on the remainder."

Mr. Audubon gives an account of the flight of these birds, quite as astonishing as the one Mr. Brewer gives of the scenes at their roosting places. He says, "In the autumn of 1813, I left my home on the banks of the Ohio, on my way to Louisville. In passing over the Barrens, I observed the pigeons passing from northeast to southwest, in greater numbers than I thought I had ever seen them before. I traveled on, and still met more, the farther I proceeded. The air was literally filled with them. The light of the sun at noonday was obscured, as if by an eclipse. Before sunset, I reached Louisville, distant from the place where I first observed them about fifty-five miles. The pigeons were still passing in undiminished numbers, and continued to do so for three days in succession. The people were all in arms. The banks of the Ohio were crowded

with men and boys, continually shooting at the pilgrims, which flew lower as they passed the river. Multitudes were thus destroyed. For a week or more, the principal food of the population was that of pigeons." In estimating the number of these mighty flocks, and the food consumed by them daily, Mr. Audubon adds, "Let us take a column of one mile in breadth, which is far below the average size, and suppose it passing over us at the rate of one mile per minute. This will give us an oblong square of one hundred and eighty miles in length by one mile in breadth; and, allowing two pigeons to the square yard, we have one billion one hundred and fifteen millions one hundred and thirty-six thousand pigeons in one flock; and as every pigeon consumes at least half a pint in a day, the quantity required to feed such a flock must be eight millions seven hundred and twelve thousand bushels per day!"

These are tough stories, reader—I confess that. The number of pigeons which, according to the statement above, must have been assembled in one single flock, is three times greater than the probable number of all the human inhabitants on the globe! They are great stories. There's no disputing that. But when


such witnesses as Audubon, Brewer, and Wilson are brought upon the stand we can hardly help believing that the stories must have a pretty broad foundation, to say the least.





THE AFRICAN BULLFINCH—MALE AND FEMALE.

The Bullfinch.



SEVERAL different species of the bullfinch are found on the continent of Europe. But the African and Asiatic species are more musical than any others, I believe. The picture here introduced represents one of the Asiatic species. The upper figure is the male, the lower one the female.

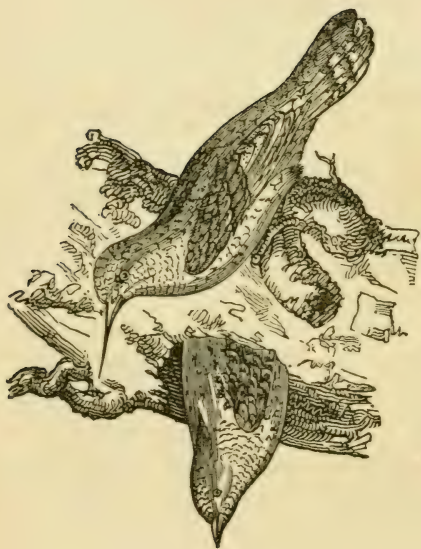
Buffon asserts that bullfinches have been known to escape from the house where they had been living in a domestic state, and be at liberty in the woods for a whole year; after which, hearing the voice of the beloved master who reared them, they would return, and never leave their master again. Others, when forced to leave a favorite master, have been known to die of grief.

They do not easily forget an injury. One

of them, having been thrown down, cage and all, by some vulgar and meanly dressed people, did not seem much disturbed by the fall; but afterward, whenever it saw a person of that description, it went into convulsions at once. Indeed, it died in a fit, brought on in this manner, about eight months after the fall.


The whole family are very affectionate and confiding birds. A bullfinch belonging to a lady in England was subject to frightful dreams, during which he would fall from his perch, and beat himself in the cage. But no sooner did he hear the kind voice of his mistress, than he would become tranquil and go to sleep again.

The picture which you see facing the title-page of this volume represents another species of the bullfinch.



WOODPECKERS.

The Woodpecker.



HALL I tell you how a boy was once cured of robbing birds' nests? The remedy cost him pretty roundly; but perhaps it was worth all he paid for it. As you may have heard, the black snake often takes possession of the hole of the woodpecker. He not only glides softly up the tree, and eats up the eggs of the woodpecker, (or young birds, as the case may be,) but he sometimes coils himself up in the nest which he has robbed, and remains there, quietly, for several days. Some boys once determined that they would go down into the orchard near the school-house, and get the eggs in a woodpecker's nest which they had previously discovered. They went to the tree where the nest was. One of the boys was delegated to climb it. He did so.

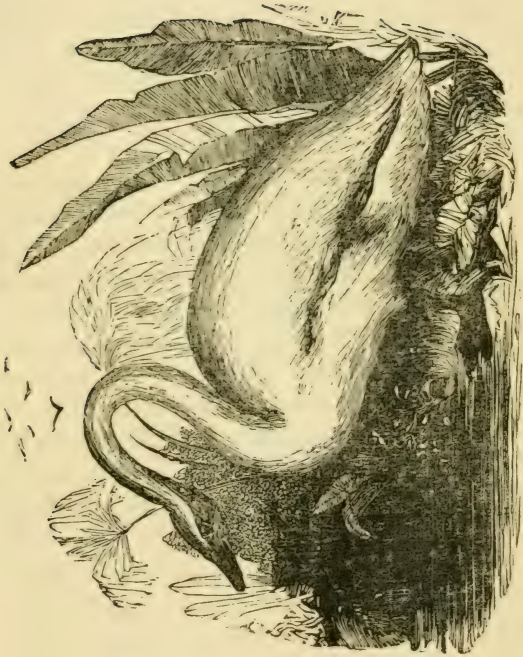
When he had got up as high as the hole in the tree, he put in his hand to get the eggs, and behold! instead of grasping what he came after, he caught hold of a huge black snake, who was snugly coiled up inside. His fright was so great, that he fell to the ground, bringing the snake with him. He broke his leg by the fall, and was confined several weeks to the house. That was the last time he ever undertook to rob a bird's nest.

Wilson, the ornithologist, in his account of the woodpecker, says that the first time he observed one of the ivory-billed species was at a place about twelve miles north of Wilmington, North Carolina. He gives the following interesting account of this bird, which he says was slightly wounded in the wing, and on being caught, uttered a loud and most piteous tone, exactly resembling the violent crying of a young child. "This," he says, "terrified my horse so, as nearly to have cost my life. It was distressing to hear him. I carried him with me in my chaise, under cover to Wilmington. In passing through the streets, his affecting cries surprised every one within hearing, particularly the females, who hurried to the doors and windows with looks of alarm and anxiety. I drove on, and on arriving at

the piazza of the hotel, where I intended to put up, the landlord came forward, and a number of other persons who happened to be there, all equally alarmed at what they heard. This was greatly increased by my asking whether he could furnish me with accommodations for myself and my baby. The man looked blank and foolish, while the others stared with still greater astonishment. After diverting myself for a minute or two at their expense, I drew my woodpecker from under the cover, and a general laugh took place. I took him up stairs and locked him up in my room, while I went to see my horse taken care of. In less than an hour I returned, and on my opening the door, he set up the same distressing shout, which now appeared to proceed from grief that he had been discovered in his attempts to escape. He had mounted along the side of the window, nearly as high as the ceiling, a little below which he had begun to break through. The bed was covered with large pieces of plaster. The lath was exposed for at least fifteen inches square, and a hole large enough to admit the fist, opened to the weatherboard; so that in less than another hour he would certainly have succeeded in making his way through. I now tied a string round his leg, and fastening it to

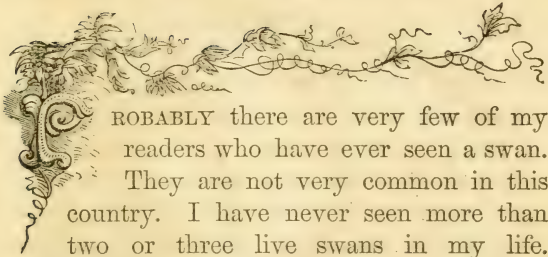
the table, again left him. I wished to preserve his life, and had gone off in search of suitable food for him. As I descended the stairs, I heard him again hard at work, and on entering had the mortification to perceive that he had entirely ruined the mahogany table to which he was fastened, and on which he had wreaked his whole vengeance. While engaged taking the drawing of him, he cut me severely in several places, and on the whole displayed such a noble and unconquerable spirit that I was frequently tempted to restore him to his native woods. He lived with me nearly three days, but refused all sustenance, and I witnessed his death with regret.

“The head and bill of this bird,” adds Mr. Wilson, “are in great esteem among the southern Indians, who wear them by way of amulet or chain, as well as ornament, and it is said dispose of them to the northern tribes at considerable prices. An Indian believes that the head, skin, or even feathers of certain birds, confer on the wearer all the virtues or excellences of those birds.”



THE SWAN.

The Swan.



PROBABLY there are very few of my readers who have ever seen a swan. They are not very common in this country. I have never seen more than two or three live swans in my life. When sailing on the water, its favorite element, the swan is a beautiful bird, and its motions are graceful. But when walking on land, it is exceedingly clumsy and awkward in its gait.

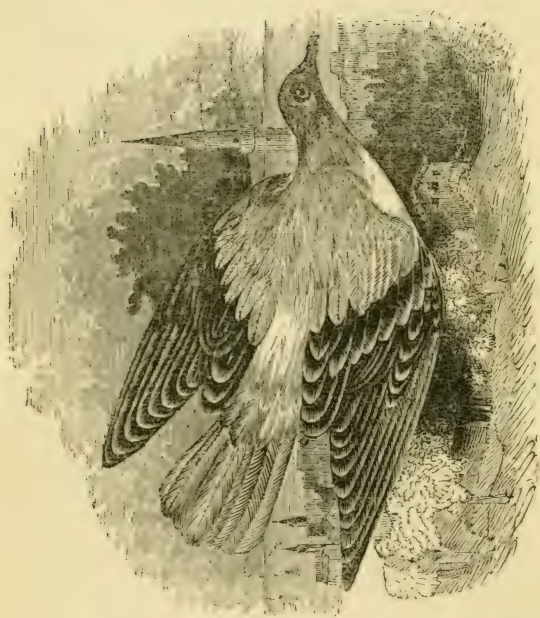
In a wild state, swans abound in the eastern portions of Europe. In Siberia, and on the shores of the Caspian Sea, there are great multitudes of them. It is a gentle and innocent bird, ordinarily; but it is a formidable enemy when driven to act on the defensive. It has great strength in its wings. When protecting its young, it has often been known to

contend successfully with large animals, and even with men.

It has been said that the swan sings a sweet song, while it is dying. This is probably a mere fable. I want much better evidence than I have yet been able to obtain to satisfy me that a swan ever sang in such circumstances, or, indeed, that one ever sang at all.

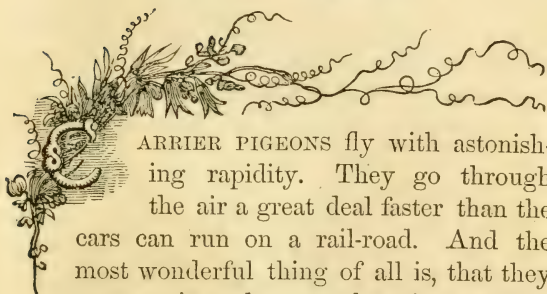
Swans were formerly held in such esteem in England, that, by an act of Edward IV. none except the son of a king was permitted to keep a swan, unless possessed of five marks a year. By a subsequent act, the punishment for taking their eggs was imprisonment for a year and a day, and a fine at the king's will. At present swans are little valued for the delicacy of their flesh, but many are still preserved for their beauty.

When in danger, the old birds are said to carry off the young ones on their back. A female swan has been known to attack and drown a fox who was swimming toward her nest. They have strength enough to throw down and trample upon boys fourteen or fifteen years old. An old swan can break the leg of a man with a single stroke of his wing.



THE CARRIER PIGEON.

The Carrier Pigeon.



CARRIER PIGEONS fly with astonishing rapidity. They go through the air a great deal faster than the cars can run on a rail-road. And the most wonderful thing of all is, that they can remain so long on the wing, without stopping to rest. There are several societies in Europe which are formed for the purpose of raising and training these birds. The members of these societies take a great deal of pains in teaching the pigeons. Sometimes they offer great prizes to those whose pigeons are swiftest on the wing. A few months ago, a number of carrier pigeons were taken from Brussels to Lyons, to be loosed, so that they would fly back to Brussels. One of the societies let loose sixty-three pigeons, at five o'clock in the morning. Prizes were to be given to the own-

ers of the birds which should return to Brussels in the shortest space of time. The first prize was won by a man whose pigeon arrived at thirty-one minutes past three o'clock in the afternoon. Another pigeon came at thirty-nine minutes past two; and a third at twenty minutes before three. The distance from Lyons to Brussels, by the rail-road, is about six hundred miles. The first pigeon performed the journey in seven hours and a half, which is at the rate of eighty miles an hour for the whole distance.

These birds are not brought up at present with so much care as formerly, when they were sent from governors in a besieged city to generals that were coming to relieve it without, and when they were sent from princes to their subjects, with the tidings of some fortunate event. Only a few years ago, however, while the means of communicating between different parts of the country were much more limited than they are at present, it was ascertained that, in some mysterious way, at every arrival of a steamer from Great Britain, the news respecting the state of the markets in England was carried to New York and Boston, very soon after the vessel touched at Halifax, and before the express established for the purpose



THE PIGEON WITH HIS LETTER.

could reach these cities. The thing was for some time a great mystery; but it was at length discovered that the agents of the large dealers in cotton, flour, and other articles, were in the habit of employing persons to take passage in these steamers, who had carrier pigeons with them. When the steamer had reached the American coast, and before she had touched at her wharf in Halifax, they let the messengers loose, with a letter tied under their wings, telling as much about the state of the markets in England as it was necessary for the merchants to know. As soon as these birds received their liberty, they flew toward their home, and scarcely stopped till they reached it, or fell down from fatigue. Several of them were found dead on the way. The distance was too great for them. They flew until they exhausted all their strength, and then dropped down dead. Of course, this smuggling business was stopped, as soon as the captain of the steamer found out what was going on.

A laughable story of some carrier pigeons is told in an Antwerp newspaper. The editor of a celebrated journal published in that city, sent a reporter to Brussels for the "king's speech," and with him a couple of carrier

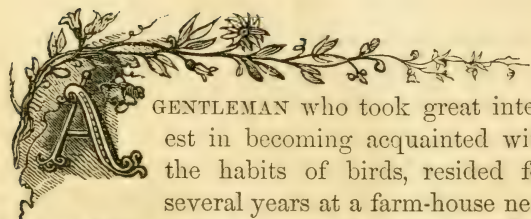
pigeons, to take back the document. At Brussels he gave the pigeons in charge to a waiter, and called for breakfast. He was kept waiting for some time, but a very delicious fricassee atoned for the delay. After breakfast he paid his bill, and called for his carrier pigeons. "Pigeons!" exclaimed the waiter, "why you've eaten them!"





THE HORNED OWL.

The Owl.



GENTLEMAN who took great interest in becoming acquainted with the habits of birds, resided for several years at a farm-house near a steep hill, on the summit of which a pair of horned owls had their nest. One day in July, a young owl, having quitted the nest, was caught by a servant of this gentleman. He shut the little fellow up in a large hen-coop. The next morning, when one of the members of the family visited the hen-coop, a young partridge was found lying dead near the coop. The gentleman made up his mind that the partridge had been brought there by the parents of the owl, who had heard the cry of the young one, and in this way found out where he was confined. The surmises of this gentleman afterward proved to be correct.

For fourteen nights, in succession, the same attention was paid to the wants of the captive bird. The game which was left at the hen-coop was generally a partridge which had just been killed, though in one or two instances it was some other bird. Whenever the gentleman or one of his servants watched at the window, the old owls were cunning enough to discover them, when they did not come near enough to leave their game. But when they were not watched, the breakfast was invariably found in the morning. In the month of August, which is the usual season at which owls leave their young to take care of themselves, the parents ceased to make their nightly visits to the hen-coop.

The screech owl, which, as my young readers need scarcely be told, is not very much admired in this country, is said to be held sacred by the Mongul and Kalmuck Tartars. They pay almost divine honors to it. The reason for such a singular devotion, I have been told, is that one of these birds was once the means of saving the life of a great prince of their's, named Jenghis Khan. That prince, when defeated by his enemies, was forced to hide himself in a dense forest. He selected for his retreat, a place under a tree upon which

was a nest of the screech owl. When his pursuers came to the place where he was concealed, and saw the owl's nest, with the bird sitting upon it, they very naturally concluded that the prince could not be there. So they did not search about the tree, and the prince was not discovered. Ever since that circumstance, and on account of it, if we may credit the somewhat doubtful voice of tradition, the screech owl has been regarded as a sacred bird.

A carpenter, passing through a field near Gloucester, England, was attacked by a barn owl, that had a nest of young ones in a tree near the path. The bird flew at his head, and the man, striking at her with a tool he had in his hand, missed his blow, when the owl repeated the attack, and with her talons fastened on his face, tore out one of his eyes, and scratched him in the most shocking manner.

Shall I tell you how a couple of owls were once the means of doing a great service to an empire? The story is a good one, and said to be true: Sultan Mahmoud—so runs the tale—by his wars abroad and his tyranny at home, had filled his dominion with ruin and desolation, and half unpeopled the Persian empire. The Vizier of this great Sultan pretended to

have learned of a certain dervise to understand the language of birds, so that there was not a bird that could open his mouth, but the Vizier knew what it was he said. As he was one evening with the Sultan, on their return from hunting, they saw a couple of owls upon a tree that grew near an old wall. "I would fain know," says the Sultan, "what these two owls are saying to one another—listen to their discourse, and give me an account of it." The Vizier approached the tree, pretending to be very attentive to the two owls. Upon his return to the Sultan, "Sire," says he, "I have heard part of their conversation, but dare not tell you what it is." The Sultan would not be satisfied with such an answer, but forced him to repeat, word for word, every thing the owls had said. "You must know, then," said the Vizier, "that one of these owls has a son, and the other a daughter, between whom they are now upon a treaty of marriage. The father of the son said to the father of the daughter, in my hearing, 'Brother, I consent to this marriage, provided you will settle upon your daughter fifty ruined villages for her portion.' To which the father of the daughter replied, 'Instead of fifty, I will give her five hundred, if you please. God grant a long life to Sultan



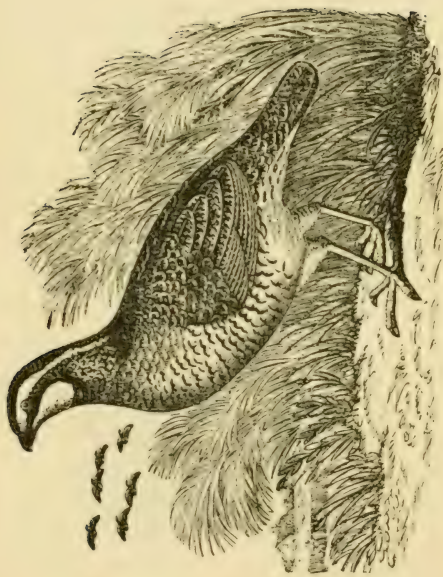
THE COMMON OWL.

Mahmoud; while he reigns over us, we shall never want for ruined villages.' ” The story says, the Sultan was so touched with the fable, that he rebuilt the towns and villages which had been destroyed, and from that time forward consulted the good of his people.

The great horned owl is famous for his theft in the poultry-yard. A very large one, who had his wing broken by a shot, while he was prowling about a farm-house, trying to catch a chicken for his dinner, was captured, and kept in the house for several days. At length he was missing, and no one knew where he was. It was thought that he had returned to the woods. Almost every day, however, after the owl went away, some hen or chicken was missing, also. A score or more of hens and chickens disappeared from the poultry-yard. Who could be the author of the mischief? was a question which every member of the family asked, but which none could satisfactorily answer. The fox, the minx, the weasel, were all suspected. One morning, the mystery was solved. The lady of the house rose earlier than usual. It was washing day, I guess. Happening to go to the well for water, she spied her old friend, the owl, making his breakfast on one of the finest of her chickens.

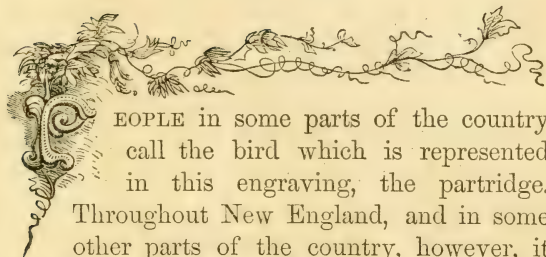
The thief instantly ran to his hole under the house. But the lady followed him, and soon used the broom-stick so thoroughly about his head, that he had no longer any power to kill chickens. In his snug retreat were found the greater part of the feathers, and many large fragments of the bones of a small army of fowls.





THE AMERICAN QUAIL.

The Quail.



PEOPLE in some parts of the country call the bird which is represented in this engraving, the partridge. Throughout New England, and in some other parts of the country, however, it goes by the name of the quail, and I shall give it that name in my stories. I know this bird well. When a boy, I was well acquainted with its haunts. Near my father's house was a beautiful meadow, and a little beyond, divided by a stream of water, which ran laughingly along over its bed of white pebbles, was a forest. There I used to set my trap for the quails, that sang "more wheat," when my father thought they had stolen already more than he well knew how to spare. Poor fellows! I never could forgive myself for the havoc I made among them. They were great

rogues, though. That thought is some little consolation to me.

Quails frequent the forest, and are most numerous in the vicinity of fields of grain. They are very fond of wheat, and the farmers sometimes suffer a good deal from their encroachments. When they are not too much persecuted by the hunter, they frequently become quite tame in the winter, and will eat with the hens around the house.

The quail builds its nest early in May. The nest is made on the ground. It is well covered above, and an opening left on one side for an entrance. You might, in the course of a ramble in the forest, pass half a dozen of these nests without discovering them, on account of their being so carefully concealed.

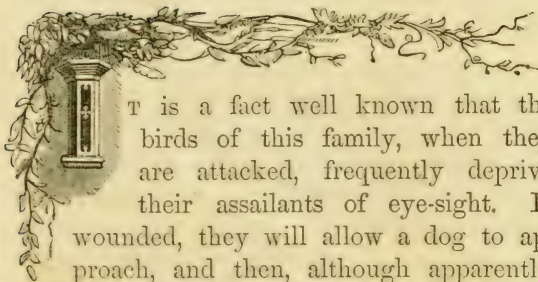
The young leave the nest as soon as they are free from the shell, and are conducted about in search of food by the female. She calls them much as a hen calls her chickens, and shelters them with her wings in the same manner. If the little family are at any time surprised, the utmost alarm prevails among them. The mother throws herself in the path, fluttering along, and beating the ground with her wings, as if sorely wounded, using every artifice she is capable of, to entice the enemy to

pursue her, instead of her young. At the same time she utters notes of alarm, well understood by the little ones, who dive separately among the tall grass, and hide till the danger is over. The parent, having decoyed the pursuer to a convenient distance, returns by a circuitous route, collects her young, and leads them off to a place of safety. This manoeuvre, in nine cases out of ten, perhaps, is successful.

Two young quails that were brought up by a hen, when abandoned by their foster-mother, formed a friendship for the cows. They followed them to the field in the morning, continued with them all day, and returned with them at evening. These quails remained with the cows during the winter, lodging in the stable; but as soon as spring came, they were missing. They doubtless left their domestic life for one more natural to them, and more in accordance with their notions of things.

During a violent storm of rain and hail, a female quail, attended by several young ones, tried to spread her wings, so as to shield them all. The storm increased. The hail came down thick and fast upon the poor mother. But still she kept her position. She would not move, for fear of exposing her little ones. There she staid, until she was killed.

The Bittern.



It is a fact well known that the birds of this family, when they are attacked, frequently deprive their assailants of eye-sight. If wounded, they will allow a dog to approach, and then, although apparently insensible, will, in an instant, with unerring aim, dart at its eyes with a force, rapidity, and certainty, which it is almost impossible to guard against. "We remember a gentleman," says a writer on the habits of this bird, "who narrowly escaped. He had, as he thought, killed a bittern, and deposited it in a large pocket of his shooting-jacket, when fortunately, as he was walking on, happening to feel something pushing itself between his arm and side, he, just in time to save his eye, caught sight of the beak of the bittern, which had only been



THE TIGER BITTERN.

wounded, and was in the act of lancing itself, with a full elastic jerk of its long neck, toward his face."

The note of the tiger bittern is supposed by ignorant and superstitious people to foretell some calamity or other, as a death in the family. "I remember," writes Goldsmith, "in the place where I was a boy, with what terror this bird's note affected the whole village. They considered it as the presage of some sad event, and generally found one to succeed it. If any person in the neighborhood died, they supposed it could not be otherwise, for the bittern had foretold it; if nobody happened to die, the death of a cow or a sheep gave completion to the prophecy."

The flesh of the bittern was formerly in high esteem. In the reign of Henry VIII. it sold for a very high price in England. In the days of falconry, the bittern was frequently hunted by the nobility. On this account, the statutes protected the eggs of this bird by very severe penalties. One year's imprisonment, and a forfeiture of eight pence for each egg, was the punishment awarded for those who destroyed or took away the eggs of the bittern. It is quite amusing to us in this day, to read what historians have recorded about hunting in

the middle ages. One would suppose, to speak phrenologically, that our good ancestors must have had the organ of "destructiveness" very largely developed.

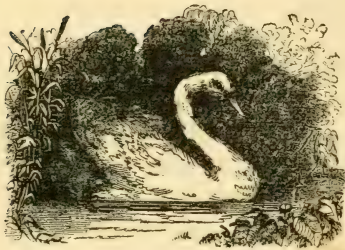
Here is a fable in which the bittern is concerned. It is from the pen of Theodore Thinker, one of the principal writers for the "Youth's Cabinet." It teaches a good moral. Please to bear it in mind, and try to profit by it:

THE DISCONTENTED BITTERN.

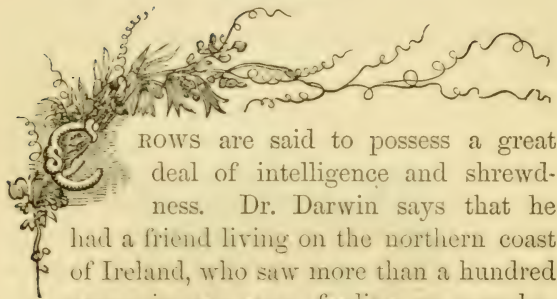
A Bittern was dissatisfied with his condition. He did not love to be living in swamps, and eating all manner of reptiles. He wanted to live in the orchard like the robin, and be a favorite with every body. "Bitterns can sing as well as robins," said he; "and I have no notion of being confined to a marsh, and catching fever and ague all my days." So he started for the orchard, partly flying and partly running at full speed, and determined to build him a house like the robin, on an apple tree. He was engaged in this business the next day, when some one from the cottage near by, saw him, and shot him, so that his wing was broken. Then he was glad to hobble back to

his old home in the swamp, and go to eating frogs and worms again.

MORAL.—Sometimes, when we complain of our condition in life, Providence allows us to change it, but shows us that we were perhaps quite as well off before.



The Crow.



ROWS are said to possess a great deal of intelligence and shrewdness. Dr. Darwin says that he had a friend living on the northern coast of Ireland, who saw more than a hundred crows in company, feeding on muscles. The plan they hit upon to break them was, each to take one up in his bill to a considerable height in the air, and then to let it fall upon the stones. In this way the shells of the muscles were broken, and they were able to get at the flesh.

There is a kind of crow which abounds in England, called the hooded crow. It is said—though I give you license to receive the facts with a grain or two of doubt—that one or two hundred of these birds will meet together, as if upon some fixed plan; and at these times, a

few of them will sit with drooping heads, while others look very grave, as if they were judges, and others still are very bustling and noisy. In about an hour, the meeting breaks up, after which one or two of the crows are generally found dead. It is supposed by those who have been witnesses of one of these assemblies, that at such times there is a sort of trial of some of their number who have behaved badly, and that those who are found dead have been convicted and punished.

A crow, that was tamed, formed a very close intimacy with the dog belonging to the family in which he lived, and became much attached to him. This dog had the misfortune to break his leg, and became quite helpless. During his confinement, which lasted a long time, this crow constantly attended him, and brought him food when he was hungry. One night, by accident, the hostler shut the door of the apartment where the dog was confined, so that the bird could not get in to see his favorite; and in the morning, it was found that the affectionate bird had pecked the bottom of the door, until he had made a hole almost large enough to allow him to get through.

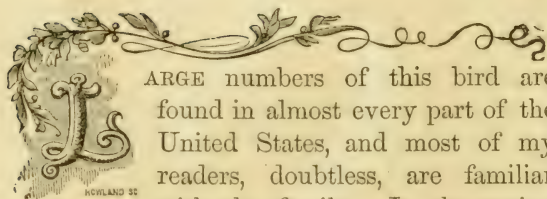
Nelson says that the most noted crow-roost that he ever saw in his life, is an island in the

Delaware. "This island," to use the words of this eminent naturalist, "sometimes goes by the name of the Pea Patch. It is only a little raised above the surrounding water, and is covered with a thick growth of reeds. The entire island is destitute of trees, and the crows alight and nestle among the reeds. The noise made by these birds, in their morning and evening assemblies, is almost incredible. Whole fields of corn are sometimes laid waste by thousands alighting on it at once, with appetites whetted by the fast of the preceding night. The utmost watchfulness is necessary on the part of the farmer, to prevent his fields from being plundered. The character of the crow is here in very bad repute. To say to the man who has lost his whole crop of corn by these birds, that crows are exceedingly useful for destroying vermin, would be just about as consoling as it would be to tell him that fires are excellent for destroying bugs, when he has just had his house burned down by the flames. Some years ago, a sudden northeast storm came on during the night, and the tide rising to an uncommon height, covered the whole island. The darkness of the night, the violence of the storm, and the suddenness with which it came on, it is supposed, so frightened the crows that

they did not attempt to escape. At any rate, nearly the whole of them perished. Thousands of them were seen the next day floating in the river; and the wind shifting to the northwest, drove their dead bodies to the New Jersey side, where, for miles, they blackened the whole shore. However, it was not long after that before the island contained as large a population of crows as ever." This race of birds, the writer thinks, must have a great affection for the Pea Patch.

A crow once attempted to carry off a young chicken or two, and got himself into trouble by the means. The chickens clustered around the parent hen, and she defended them with a good deal of heroism. At last she drove the enemy into an apple tree, and fought him there so furiously, that he was soon glad to retreat, and give up his chance of getting a dinner in that quarter.

The Turtle Dove.



ARGE numbers of this bird are found in almost every part of the United States, and most of my readers, doubtless, are familiar with the family. In the spring of the year, all over the country, from Canada to Florida, the voice of this species of the dove may be heard. There is something sad and mournful about the song he sings, and on this account, he has sometimes been called the *mourning dove*. But the bird is not sad himself, or at least, I have never seen any reason to believe he was sad. He seems to be singing to his mate, when he utters these notes, and enjoying himself as much as any of the birds that make the woods ring with their music, in the spring of the year. The notes of the turtle dove are four. The first is the



THE TURTLE DOVE.

highest and shortest, which is followed by three long, deep, and mournful ones—so mournful, that, in spite of all my efforts, they make me sad, almost, only to think of them. You will generally hear the song of this bird in the deepest and darkest part of the woods, generally about noon and toward evening.

When I was a little boy, I used often to see these birds, in flocks of twenty or more, near the house where I lived. They came to visit us, for the purpose of getting food, I suppose. How beautiful they were! I shall never forget how happy it made me, when I first saw them alight near the barn, and pick up the kernels of grain that were scattered on the ground.

It is not very difficult to tame the turtle dove. He is one of the most loving creatures you ever saw. A friend of mine told me a story, the other day, about one that somebody gave him, and that became so tame that he was even troublesome, at times. They called him Dick. They let him fly out of doors, wherever he wished to go; but as soon as he was called by his name, if he was near enough to hear, he flew up to the person who called him, as swiftly as he could, and frequently alighted on his shoulder. Very often, he would accompany the boy who owned him to school, unless

he was sent home. Every morning, after breakfast, he watched his young master, when he was not shut up; and as soon as the boy started, with his satchel of books, the dove came and flew upon his master's shoulder, as much as to say, "Yes, Charley, I am all ready—I am going to school with you, if you have no objection."

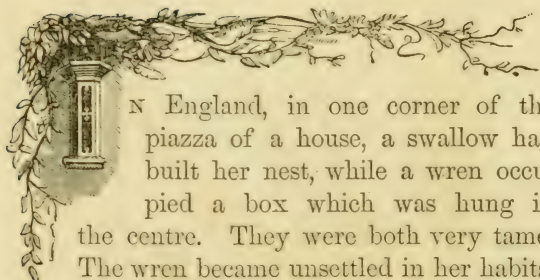
Whenever Charley had been away and came home, the dove would fly to him in a moment, hop up to his shoulder, caress him, and show, in a great many ways, how glad he was to see his young master. Frequently, when he found his way into the dining-room, while the family were at table, he took the liberty to perch upon the table, near Charley, and sometimes he would stand upon the edge of the little boy's plate or tea-cup.

Dick came to a dreadful end, at last. The cat caught him, and killed him. What a common thing it is for little pets, like this turtle dove, to die. I have lost a great many pets; and sometimes I have felt sad enough, when one after another was taken away from me. These lines, written by Moore, have come into my mind, a great many times, though I hope I have not thought of them in a complaining and fault-finding spirit:

“O ever thus from childhood’s hour
I’ve seen my fondest hopes decay;
I never loved a tree or flower,
But ’twas the first to fade away;
I never nursed a dear gazelle,
To glad me with its soft, blue eye,
But when it came to know me well,
And love me, it was sure to die.”

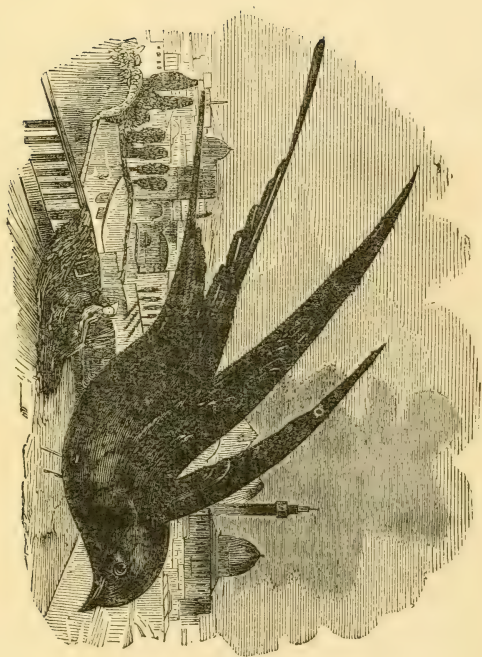
I said I hoped I had never had a fault-finding spirit, when I thought of these lines. It would be very wrong to have such a spirit. There may be truth in the poetry; but there is no reason why we should complain, if it is true. God takes away the things that we love; and it would be a sin against him to find fault with our lot, when we suffer such losses. Though it is true that our great and good Creator and Governor often takes away the objects which we love the most, it is equally true that he does all things well, and many of the losses which cost us so much pain at the time, are calculated to make us better, and to fit us for heaven.

The Swallow.



IN England, in one corner of the piazza of a house, a swallow had built her nest, while a wren occupied a box which was hung in the centre. They were both very tame. The wren became unsettled in her habits, and took a notion into her head, one day, that she would turn her neighbor out of house and home, and use the timber in her nest in building a new one for herself. The little thief! I have seen her doing such things. It is a very common trick of the spiteful wren. Well, she had no sooner formed the determination to do this deed, than at it she went, with all her might. It was not long before every particle of the swallow's nest was removed to the box occupied by the wren. Then the thief twittered at a great rate, as if she had done

THE SWALLOW.



something very cunning. And what do you think the swallow did, under these circumstances? Nothing at all, but just to go to work and build another nest, in the shortest possible space of time. She was for peace, it seems. Perhaps she had some such notions about fighting as the Quakers have, though possibly she might have thought that her covetous and quarrelsome neighbor would be pretty sure to have the best of it, if they should commence a pitched battle. I confess myself, a little inclined to favor the latter opinion, and I will tell you why. The swallow family, when a large number of them are together, and they are pretty confident they are the stronger party, are not celebrated for their non-resistance principles. They do not hesitate to defend themselves, in such circumstances, as the following anecdote, related by the celebrated Dr. Adam Clarke, will show:

When this gentleman was at Ratcliff-Close, according to a paragraph in his memoir by Everett, happening to look up to the eaves of a house, he saw a number of swallows' nests in a row. It struck him as a strange fact, that there appeared to be no mode of entering the nests, and he asked his friend, the proprietor of the house, what was the meaning of it. The

account which the doctor received from his friend was this: The nests had been occupied during the year previous. Before the return of the swallows to their old haunts in the spring of the year in which Dr. Clarke discovered that the nests had no door to them, some sparrows had come, and taken possession of the whole territory. On the arrival of the lawful owners, attempts were made to turn the intruders out of doors. But it was not so easily done. The sparrows maintained their ground, and the swallows at last concluded it was no use to try any longer to drive the little rascals from the premises. What was to be done? That was the question. The whole army of swallows assembled on the roof of the house, and sat for some time, as if in grave deliberation. Then they seemed to have hit upon some other plan. At any rate, they all flew away, and, in a few seconds, returned with their bills full of mud, with which they closed up the holes of the nests, and buried the sparrows alive. "That was returning evil for evil," said one of the doctor's friends, when he told him the story. "Not exactly," was the answer. "I think the swallows did right enough. If a man were to enter my house, take possession of it, and turn my wife and children out of doors, should I

not, on finding that I could not get rid of him, be justified in nailing him in?"

That ardent admirer of nature, Mrs. Child, tells a pretty anecdote about a family of swallows which she was acquainted with. "Two barn swallows," she says, "came into our woodshed in the spring-time. Their busy, earnest twitterings, led me at once to suspect they were looking out a building spot; but as a carpenter's bench was under the window, and very frequently hammering, sawing, and planing were going on, I had little hope that they would choose a location under our roof. To my surprise, however, they soon began to build in the crotch of a beam over the open doorway. I was delighted, and spent more time watching than 'penny-wise' people would have approved. It was, in fact, a beautiful little drama of domestic love. The mother bird was so busy, and so important; and her mate was so attentive! Never did any newly married couple take more satisfaction with their first nicely arranged drawer of baby clothes, than they did in fashioning their little woven cradle.

"The father bird scarcely ever left the side of the nest. There he was all day long, twittering in tones that were most obviously the outpourings of love. Sometimes he would

bring in a straw, or hair, to be interwoven in the previous little fabric. One day my attention was arrested by a very unusual twittering, and I saw him circling round, with a large downy feather in his bill. He bent over the unfinished nest, and offered it to his mate with the most graceful and loving air imaginable; and when she put up her mouth to take it, he poured forth such a gust of gladsome sound! It seems as if pride and affection had swelled his heart till it was almost too big for his little bosom.

“When the young became old enough to fly, any body would have laughed to watch the manœuvres of the parents! Such a chirping and twittering! Such diving down from the nest, and flying up again! Such wheeling round in circles, talking to the young ones all the while! Such clinging to the sides of the shed with their sharp claws, to show the timid little fledglings that there was no need of falling! For three days all this was carried on with increasing activity. It was obviously an infant flying school. But all their talking and fussing was of no avail. The little things looked down, then looked up, but alarmed at the infinity of space, sunk down into the nest again. At length the parents grew impatient,

and summoned their neighbors. As I was picking up chips one day, I found my head encircled by a swarm of swallows. They flew up to the nest, and jabbered away to the young ones; they clung to the walls, looking back to tell how the thing was done; they dived, and wheeled, and balanced, and floated in a manner perfectly beautiful to behold. The pupils were evidently much excited. They jumped on the edge of the nest, and twittered, and shook their feathers, and waved their wings, and then hopped back again, saying, 'It's pretty sport, but we can't do it.' Three times the neighbors came and repeated their graceful lesson. The third time, two of the young birds gave a sudden plunge downward, and then fluttered and hopped till they lighted on a small upright log. And oh, such praises as were warbled by the whole troop! The air was filled with their joy! Some were flying around, swift as a ray of light; others were perched on the hoe handle, and the teeth of the rake; multitudes clung to the wall, after the fashion of their pretty kind, and two were swinging, in most graceful style, on a pendent hoop. Never, while memory lasts, shall I forget the swallow party."

Mr. M'Cord, the gentleman to whom I have

before referred as one of the most acceptable writers for my "Youth's Cabinet," has drawn a lesson from the efforts of the parent swallows in persuading their young to leave the nest. "They urge them soon," he says, in one of his sweet songs for youth,

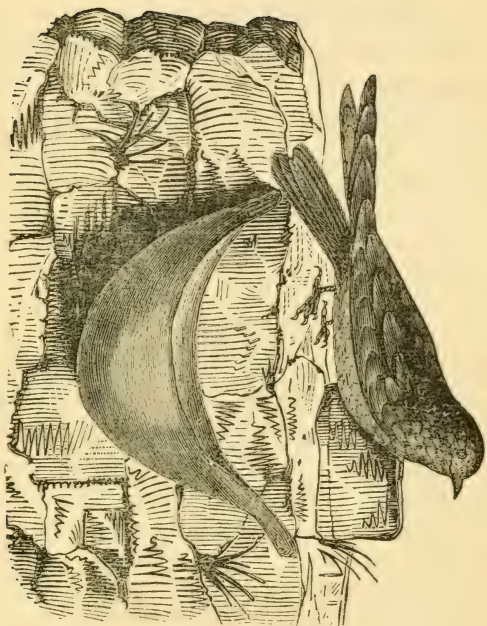
"They urge them soon, with voice and wing,
To range o'er hill and dale;
The fledgelings from their cradle spring,
But find their efforts fail.

"But where the parents lead the way,
As oft they try to rise,
They learn at length their wings to play,
And trace the lofty skies.

"If pleased, beneath an ash reclined,
To view a sight so fair,
I more would joy, with men to find
The wisdom practiced there.

"May peace and love, to heaven allied,
Thus dwell at every door;
Let parents thus their offspring guide,
And teach their souls to soar."

You have doubtless heard of the *esculent* swallow, and of the remarkable nest which it builds. This bird is a native of China and the islands in the vicinity. On another page you have a picture of the bird and its nest. The



THE ESCULENT SWALLOW AND NEST.

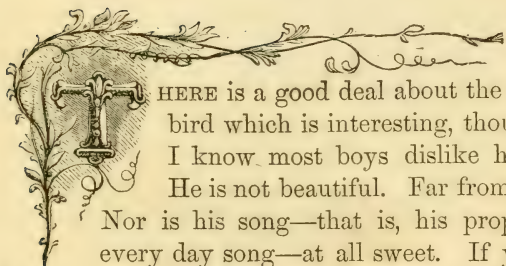


nest of the esculent swallow is regarded as a great luxury. It is composed in part of a substance resembling gum, which is eaten by the emperors and noblemen, and other rich people. It commands so high a price that none but the wealthy can afford to eat it. These nests are found in caverns, and the capture of them is often attempted with a great deal of danger. The caves are sometimes only reached by a perpendicular descent of several hundred feet, by means of ladders made of bamboo or ratan, over a sea dashing violently against the rocks. When the mouth of the cave is reached, the task of taking the nest must be performed by torch-light, by pushing one's way into the small crevices of the rocks, where the slightest slip of the foot would be instantly fatal to the adventurers, who would be precipitated into the chasm below, where the surf is rolling with the noise of thunder. These nests sell frequently for as high a price as twenty or thirty dollars a pound. It is said that from Java there are annually exported upward of twenty thousand pounds of these birds' nests, the greater part of which are of the first quality. The whole yearly quantity consumed, it is computed, cannot be less than two hundred thousand pounds, which cost the consumers

more than a million of dollars. One would suppose that the material of which these nests are composed must be very delicious as an article of food; and yet Europeans who have tried to eat this dish have not found it very palatable. "There is no accounting for tastes," you know.



The Cat Bird.



HERE is a good deal about the cat bird which is interesting, though I know most boys dislike him. He is not beautiful. Far from it. Nor is his song—that is, his proper, every day song—at all sweet. If you have never heard the notes of the cat bird, you can get a pretty good idea of the music, from the squalling of a poor kitten which has lost its mother, and is wandering about in search of a friend and something to eat. Still, the cat bird is quite a mimic. He has a good deal of talent in imitating the songs of other birds, and at times his music is very sweet. Indeed, he is sometimes called the mocking bird, although improperly, as the true mocking bird is not found, except in cages, as far north as the latitude of New York. He is a native

of the Southern States, where he fills the woods with his sweet music, delighting every body who hears him.

The nest of the cat bird is quite a curiosity. Did you ever discover one of these nests in the swamp, in the spring of the year? Many of you, I am quite well aware, being shut up among the brick walls of the city, have never visited at all the favorite haunts of this bird. So I must give you some idea of his curious nest by a picture. The place chosen for building is generally a thicket of briars, or a thorn bush. The cat bird family are not very careful about concealing their nest. The reason of this comparative carelessness is, I suppose, that they are all great fighters, and never fail to defend their rights, when they are attacked, no matter from what source. The materials of which its nest is formed are dry leaves and weeds, small twigs, and fine, dry grass. The inside is lined by the small fibrous roots of plants, woven together in the most curious manner. How many times, when a boy, while I have been rambling in a swamp, have I heard the harsh voice of the cat bird, as she flew in alarm from her nest, and have stopped to admire this ingenious structure. The female lays four and sometimes five eggs, of a greenish blue color.



THE NEST OF THE CAT BIRD.

Black snakes and cat birds are great enemies. The nest of this bird is never raised very high from the ground, and as the black snake is fond of eggs, he often tries to help himself to those in the cat bird's nest. But the bird uniformly attacks the snake, and is generally the victor. "Yesterday," says one who took a great deal of pleasure in watching the habits of birds, "I observed a conflict between a cat bird and a snake. I was within a few yards of the combatants. The bird pounced upon the snake, snapping his bill. The snake would then draw himself into a coil, ready for a blow; but the bird would cautiously avoid him, now and then running up to him, and then retreating to avoid the blow. After some minutes it became a running fight, the snake retreating, till at last he took shelter in the wall. The cat bird had a nest in the bushes, near the field of battle."

An eminent naturalist took two half-fledged young cat birds from one nest, and placed them safely in another nest, which contained five eggs. The female soon turned out the vagabonds. But the male, seeing them at the foot of the tree, and hearing their cries of distress, acted the part of the good Samaritan to them. He went and got some food for them, and con-

tinued to feed them until they were able to take care of themselves.

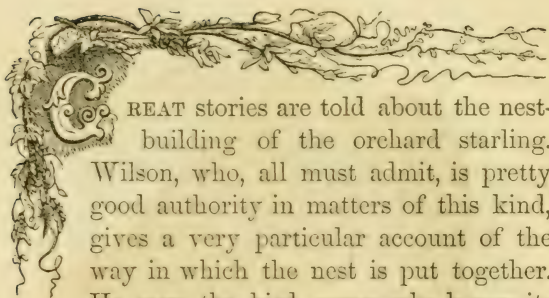
Mr. Gosse, in his history of the Birds of Jamaica, gives an amusing account of the mocking bird, which, as the two birds belong to the same family, is not out of place here. The hogs, it seems, are the creatures which give this bird the most annoyance. They are ordinarily fed upon the inferior oranges, the fruit being shaken down to them in the evening. Hence they acquire the habit of resorting to the orange tree to wait for a lucky wind fall. The mocking bird, feeling nettled at the intrusion, flies down, and begins to peck at the hog with all its might. Piggy, not understanding the matter, but pleased with the thing, gently lies down and turns up his broad side to enjoy it. The poor bird gets into an agony of distress, pecks and pecks again, but increases the enjoyment of the intruder, and is at last compelled to give up in despair.

Birds belonging to this genus are sometimes, though I think rarely, taught a variety of cunning tricks. Mr. Barber, a friend of mine residing in the city of New York, tells me that he once owned a mocking bird who would play with him like a child. The bird, among other amusing tricks, would feign that

he was dead. His master took him up by his bill, or by the end of one of his claws, and the bird would remain motionless, and let his wings droop, just as if he was dead.

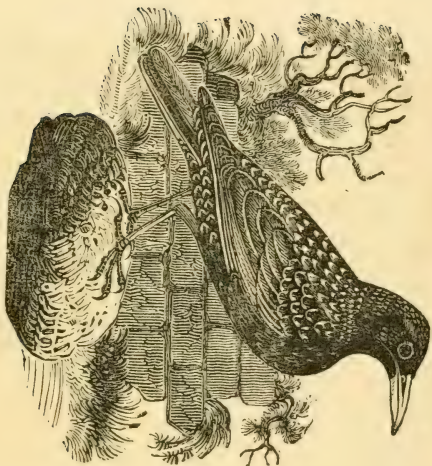


The Starling.



REAT stories are told about the nest-building of the orchard starling. Wilson, who, all must admit, is pretty good authority in matters of this kind, gives a very particular account of the way in which the nest is put together. He says the bird commonly hangs its nest from the twigs of an apple tree. The outside is made of a particular kind of long, tough grass, that will bend without breaking, and this grass is knit or sewed through and through in a thousand directions, just as if done with a needle. The little creature does it with its feet and bill. Mr. Wilson says that he one day showed one of these nests to an old lady, and she was so much struck with the work that she asked him, half in earnest, if he did not think that these birds could be taught to *darn stock-*

THE SPARLING.



ings? Mr. Wilson took the pains, too, to draw out one of these grass threads, and found that it measured thirteen inches, and in that distance the bird who used it had passed it in and out thirty-four times."

"I saw," says a writer who took a great interest in the habits of birds, "when I was in the West Indies, another kind of starling which will cut leaves into a shape like the quarter of an orange-rind, and sew the whole very neatly to the under side of a banana-leaf, so as to make one side of the nest. But there is another most beautiful little bird, which is called the tailor-bird, because it sews so well. It first picks out a plant with large leaves, then it gathers cotton from the shrub, and with the help of its fine long bill and slender little feet, it spins this cotton into a thread, and then, using its bill for a needle, it will sew these large leaves together, to hide its nest, and sew them very neatly, too."

How is it possible for a boy to rob the nest of a bird after she has taken so much pains to build it? Did it ever occur to you, young reader, how much pain it causes the dear birds, when their eggs or their young are taken away from them? and then, did it never strike you as very mean and ungenerous to cause all this

pain for a prize that was worth so little to you? What can be done to prevent thoughtless children from robbing birds' nests? I have written to Mrs. Sigourney, one of the sweetest and most gifted bards of her sex, and whose heart, I know, is full of tenderness for every thing that breathes—I have written to her for an appeal to the little folks in behalf of the birds; and she has sent me the following lines, which she puts into the mouth of the bird on her nest:

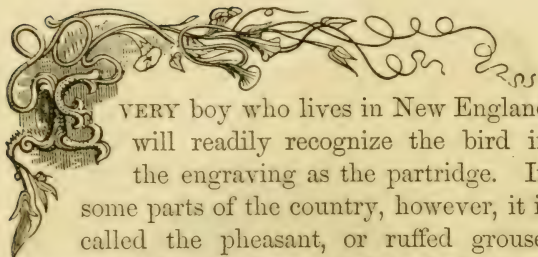
“Boy, bright boy, 'neath the sunny sky,
What do you see, with that sparkling eye?
Why are you bending a glance so keen
On this quiet nook 'mid the branches green?
Have you spied my nest?—I am faint with fear!
Are you lifting your foot to climb to me here?
The school-bell rings!—You are called to go!
'Tis so bad to be tardy at school, you know.—
Hark to the shout of your comrade's play.—
Praise to our Father! He hastens away.

“Lady! fair lady, who o'er the mead
Thy little child by the hand dost lead,
Pointing out to its wondering gaze
The flower that blooms, or the lamb that strays,
I tremble not at your upraised arm,
A mother never can do me harm.
Too well have her sorrows and cares refined,
To an angel's pity, her gentle mind.

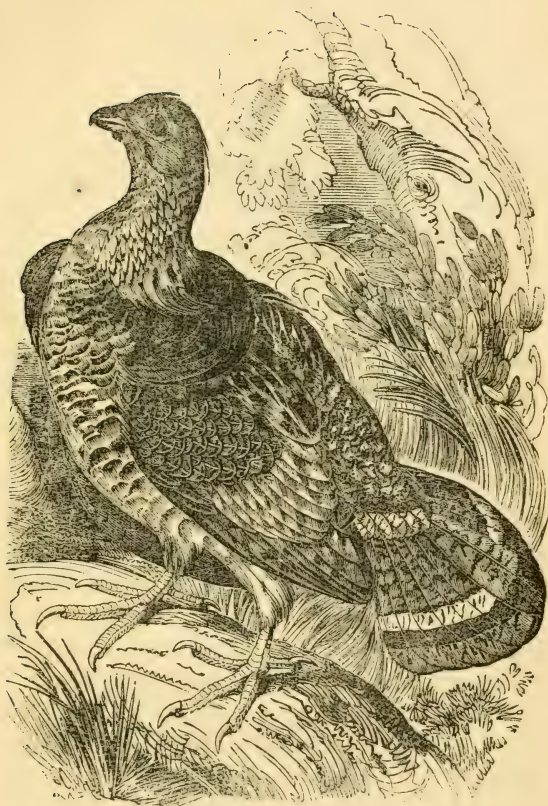
Come and sit 'neath this shady tree,
And I'll sing a song to thy child and thee.—
Mother! kind mother, in goodness blest,
Heaven be the guard of thine own dear nest."



The Partridge.



VERY boy who lives in New England will readily recognize the bird in the engraving as the partridge. In some parts of the country, however, it is called the pheasant, or ruffed grouse. How many times I have tried to find a partridge's nest. I have spent hours in hunting after one, which I was almost sure must be within a few feet of me, but which, after I learned the tricks of the partridge family, I found out to have been a great mistake. When the bird has a nest, and sees or hears a boy coming, though at a great distance off, she will leave her nest, after having covered it up carefully with leaves, and without making the least noise, walk away several rods. Then she will make a great ado around that spot, as if her treasures were concealed there. I do not



THE PHEASANT

remember that I ever yet had the wit to discover a partridge's nest.



THE PARTRIDGE, PLAYING A TRICK.

The drumming of the partridge is one of his singular habits. Few who are in the habit of visiting his haunts in the woods can have failed to hear this drumming. The noise is made only by the males. At first the strokes are slow and distinct; but they gradually increase in rapidity, till they run into each other, and resemble the rumbling sound of very distant thunder, dying away gradually on the ear. After a brief pause, the drumming is again repeated. In a calm day, it may be heard at the

distance of half a mile. This drumming is produced in the following manner: The bird, standing on an old log, perhaps, lowers his wings, spreads his tail, and erects it, contracts his throat, raises the two tufts of feathers on the neck, and inflates his whole body, something after the manner of the turkey cock, strutting and wheeling about, with great pomp and parade. After a few manœuvres of this kind, he begins to strike with his wings, in short and quick strokes, which become more and more rapid. By this means the bird calls his mate.

The black cock belongs to the grouse tribe, and in many respects resembles our partridge. It is not found in this country, I believe, though it is quite a celebrated bird in the Highlands of Scotland. The male is entirely black; the female more nearly resembles the partridge. The black cock is of about the size of the domestic hen.

Mr. Wilson says he once started a hen partridge, when walking in the woods, who seemed to have but a single young one. As soon as the mother saw him coming, instead of concealing the little one among the leaves, as is the practice usually with birds of this species, she took the little fellow up in her bill,

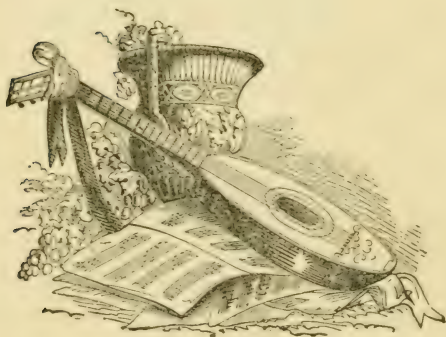


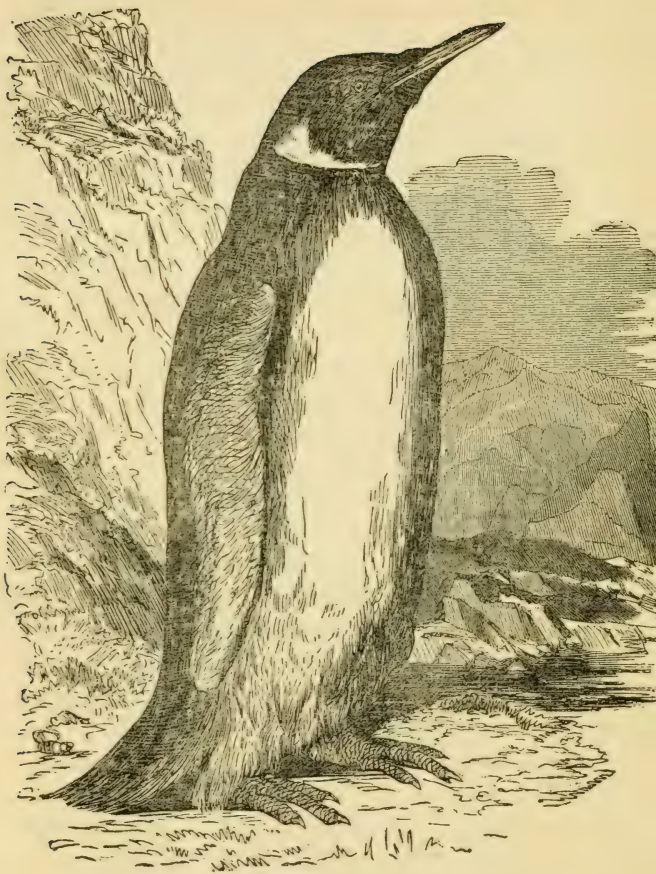
THE BLACK COCK.

and ran off with it. Was not this a case of something more than mere blind instinct? I think it was. The bird could not have secured the safety of several young ones in this manner. But she had wit enough to perceive that with a single one the case was very different. She saw that there was here really no necessity for resorting to the common expedient of hiding her young, and of running the risk of their being found. So she seized it, and ran off with it.

A partridge was introduced into a family where he was treated very kindly, and where he soon became quite tame. In the same family, there was a spaniel dog. The two, singularly enough, formed a very strong friendship for each other. When the hour of dinner arrived, the partridge invariably flew on his mistress' shoulder, calling with that shrill note which is so well known to sportsmen; and the spaniel leaped with equal ardor. One dish of bread and milk was placed on the floor, out of which the spaniel and the bird fed together; and after their social meal, the dog would return to a corner to sleep while the partridge would nestle near him, and never stir till his favorite awoke. Whenever the dog accompanied his mistress out, the bird displayed the

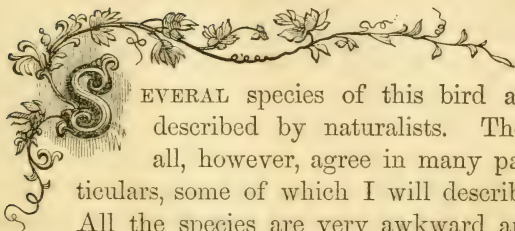
utmost anxiety till his return ; and once, when the partridge was shut up by accident, during the whole day, the dog searched about the house with a mournful cry, which indicated the strength of his affection. The friendship of Tom and Bill was finally brought to an end. The beautiful little dog was stolen, and the bird from that time refused all food, and died on the seventh day, a victim to his grief.





THE GREAT AUK.

The Penguin.



SEVERAL species of this bird are described by naturalists. They all, however, agree in many particulars, some of which I will describe.

All the species are very awkward and unwieldy on land. The reader has often noticed what bungling work a duck makes of walking. He acts like a sailor who has just set his feet on land, after a six months' voyage. But the penguin greatly exceeds the duck in awkwardness. Their body is larger and heavier, and their legs shorter and clumsier. Their wings are very short, too. They resemble the fins of a fish, almost as much as they do the wings of a bird in general. Penguins use their wings in walking, to some extent, much in the way that a man uses a setting oar to push a boat along in shoal water.

When hobbling along on land, they are said to resemble a dog who has been taught to stand on his hinder feet. Were it not for the aid they derive from their wings in walking, they would hardly move faster than a tortoise. But awkward as penguins are on land, they move gracefully and swiftly on the surface of the water. They urge themselves forward as the Indian does his canoe, with the paddles in the rear. Penguins are famous for diving, too. Little boy, did you ever plunge into a deep river or lake, head foremost? Very likely you have; and some of you, perhaps, pride yourselves a little on your skill in performing this feat. But the penguin can beat you, depend upon it. By inclining his body a little forward, as he is swimming, he loses his centre of gravity, and down he goes below the surface. Every stroke from his feet, after that, only tends to sink him the faster. In this way they often catch fish, remaining a short time under water, then coming up to take breath, and again plunging under water. When they find themselves pursued by an enemy, they instantly sink, and remain a long time with all their body under water, except their bill.

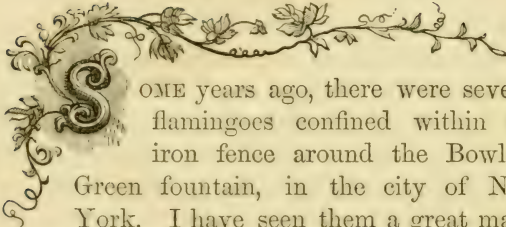
You cannot imagine how admirably the Creator has fitted these birds for their favorite

element. They are covered all over with a warmer coat of feathers than any other bird, and their lungs are fitted with numerous cavities, by which they can take in a great quantity of air at once, so that they can remain the longer under water.

At a distance penguins look like children with aprons on them—their pin-like wings hanging down like arms, and their white breast resembling the finest linen. They are of a social disposition; and when they come on shore, they may be seen drawn up in rank and file upon a ledge of rock, standing with the albatross, as if holding a sort of consultation on matters and things of common interest to both tribes. In countries where the penguin abounds, and which have seldom been visited by man, the bird is remarkably tame. Whole flocks of them will sometimes stand still, and allow themselves to be approached and captured. Penguins lay but one egg, and in situations which are much frequented by enemies. They burrow like rabbits. Sometimes three or four take possession of one hole, and hatch their young together.

The engraving represents a variety of the penguin known as the great auk, found in the group of islands, called the Hebrides.

The Flamingo.



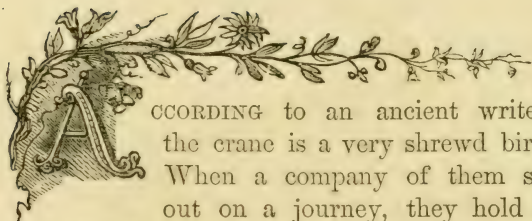
SOME years ago, there were several flamingoes confined within the iron fence around the Bowling Green fountain, in the city of New York. I have seen them a great many times. Until I caught a glimpse of them, wading in the basin of the fountain, I was a little sceptical, I must confess, in respect to the length of this bird's neck and legs; for I had heard great stories on this point. But one glance satisfied me that the flamingo had not been too extravagantly described. The picture which is here introduced, gives you a pretty good idea of the appearance of the bird. There is a fine specimen of the flamingo among the curiosities of the American Museum, in the city of New York. I noticed, the other day, while standing near it, that it exceeded me in height by several inches.



THE FLAMINGO.

An amusing anecdote is told about a company of flamingoes being mistaken for soldiers. During the French revolutionary war, when the English were expected to attack St. Domingo, a negro, having perceived at the distance of a mile or two, a long file of flamingoes, pruning their wings, thought they were English soldiers. Their long necks he mistook for shouldered muskets, and their scarlet plumage he took for military costume. The poor fellow accordingly started off to Gonalves, running through the streets, and shouting that the English had come! Upon this alarm, the commandant of the garrison instantly sounded the alarm, doubled the guards, and sent out a body of men to meet the invaders. But he soon found, by means of his glass, that it was only a company of red flamingoes. So the troops marched back to the garrison, not a little merry with the result of their expedition.

The Crane.



ACCORDING to an ancient writer, the crane is a very shrewd bird. When a company of them set out on a journey, they hold a council, and choose their leader and sentinels. When they are on the wing, they fly very high in the air. They never rest without having several sentinels watching. These sentinels make a peculiar cry, if any danger seems to threaten the company. Those upon whom the duty of watching falls stand upon one foot, and hold a little stone in the other, so that, if they should happen to get to sleep, the stone would fall, and wake them up. The captain holds his head high in the air, and gives direction, from time to time, what is to be done.

When they are wounded, they attack the hunter or his dog with great spirit, and are

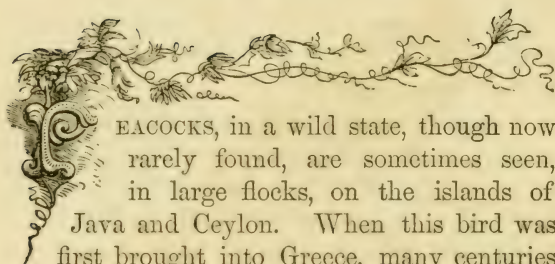


THE CRANE.

said to have driven their long pointed bill through a man's hand in such encounters. When these birds become old and infirm, they are nourished with great care and tenderness by their young; so that children may learn even from the crane, a lesson of filial love and kindness. But I trust my young friends do not need to go to school to these long-necked teachers, to learn how to feel or how to behave toward their parents.

Cranes make sad havoc with a field of grain. A flock of them will settle on a field, generally in the night, when the grain is nearly fit for harvesting, and trample it down, so that it has all the appearance of having been crossed by a regiment of soldiers. On other occasions, they select some extensive solitary marsh, where they range themselves all day, as if they were holding a council; and then, not being able to get the grain, an article of food which they like better than any thing else, they wade the marshes for insects and other food.

The Peacock.



PEACOCKS, in a wild state, though now rarely found, are sometimes seen, in large flocks, on the islands of Java and Ceylon. When this bird was first brought into Greece, many centuries ago, the people prized it so highly, that a sum equal to fifty dollars of our money was paid for one peacock. When Alexander was in India, he saw these birds flying wild, in vast numbers, and was so struck with their beauty, that he ordered those who killed or disturbed one of the birds to be severely punished; and in Greece, for some time after the introduction of the bird into that country, a large price was paid for the privilege of seeing it.

The peacock is among the most beautifully dressed birds in the world, and I am sorry to



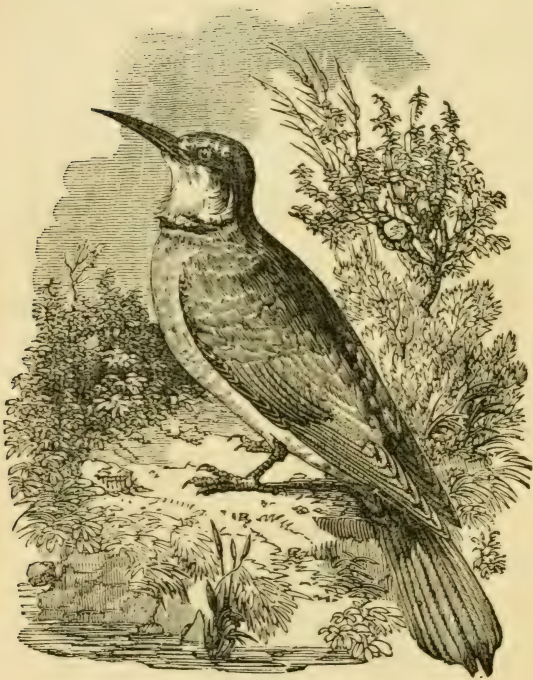
THE PEACOCK

say that he seems to be too well aware of his beauty himself. He struts among his companions—I beg pardon of all military men in general, and sundry pompous ones in particular—like a general at the head of his brigade. But his voice! The ravings of a screech owl are more tolerable than this music. I doubt if there is a bird on the face of the globe that could scream a more frightful solo. And yet he seems to consider himself a most excellent singer. Doubtless he supposes that nearly all the world are charmed with his soft, melodious notes, and that, if any of them are not so charmed, it is owing, unfortunately for them, to their education having been neglected, so that they have no musical taste. That is the way with pride, all the world over. It is not confined to any country, or to any race of the animal creation, or to either sex. The peacock is not the only creature that is vain of his beauty and his accomplishments. You can find this same vanity, if you search for it with sufficient care, in men and women, and boys and girls. But it is a foolish thing, wherever you meet with it. True merit is not often found in company with pride and vanity. I have generally found, in my acquaintance with mankind, that those people were proudest who

had the least to be proud of. It is among the ranks of the poorest singers that one meets with the most self-conceit. Do you think that Jenny Lind, "the Swedish Nightingale," as she is called—the sweetest singer, probably, on the face of the globe—do you think she is puffed up with pride on account of her talent? Not she. She is one of the most humble and modest of women. She has too much merit to be conceited.

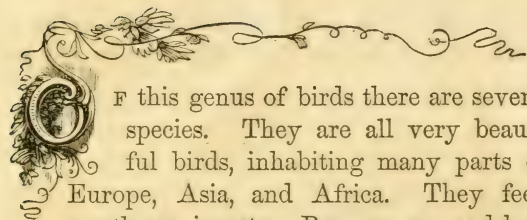
But I must stop talking in this strain, or you will say I am preaching, instead of telling stories about birds.





THE AFRICAN BEE EATER.

The Bee Eater.



IF this genus of birds there are several species. They are all very beautiful birds, inhabiting many parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa. They feed mostly on insects. Bees, wasps, and hornets, furnish them with a dainty dish. The boys in Candia catch these birds by fastening a grasshopper to a hook, with a string attached to it. The grasshopper is able to fly, and the bee eater seizes it. But he finds himself caught by the hook, and the boy takes him by pulling in the long string. It is barbarous sport, do you not think so?

The engraving represents a species found in Southern Africa. A modern traveler says, "The morning and evening are the times of feeding. The note of the bird, well known to African hunters, is then shrill. The latter

answer the note from time to time, till the bird is in sight; then it flies forward by short flits, toward the spot where the hive is situated, and thus secures a portion of the spoil from its grateful allies."

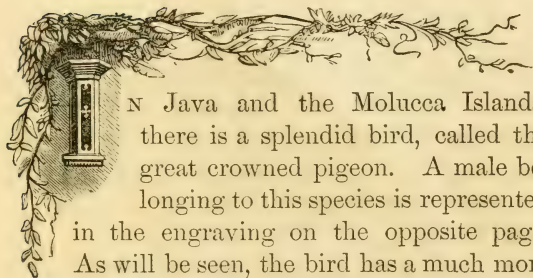
The natives hold these birds in great reverence, and highly resent the killing of them. In order to fortify them against the stings of bees, nature has furnished them with skins so thick that they can with difficulty be pierced with a pin.





THE CROWNED PIGEON.

Pigeons, Wild and Tame.

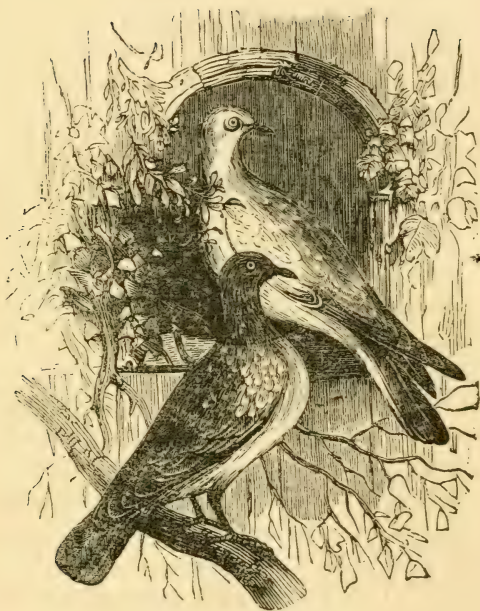


IN Java and the Molucca Islands, there is a splendid bird, called the great crowned pigeon. A male belonging to this species is represented in the engraving on the opposite page. As will be seen, the bird has a much more showy appearance than the members of this family which are common among us.

Jesse, in his "Gleanings in Natural History," gives the following testimony to the affection of the common domestic dove: "A man," he says, "set to watch a field of peas which had been much injured by pigeons, shot an old male pigeon who had long been a pensioner on the farm. His mate immediately flew down upon the ground by his side, and showed her grief in the most affecting manner. The man took up the dead bird, and tied it to a stake.

thinking the sight of it would frighten away the other pigeons. In this situation, however, his partner did not forsake him, but continued, day after day, walking slowly around the stick from which the dead bird was suspended. The kind-hearted wife of the man who cultivated the farm, at length heard of the affair, and immediately went to the field, to afford what relief she could to the poor widowed bird. She told me, that, on arriving at the spot, she found the hen much exhausted, and that she had made a circular beaten track around the dead pigeon. It was not until her loved mate was removed, that the mourning widow returned to the dove-cote."

Audubon, in his biography of birds, tells a very interesting tale about a pirate who was reformed by the agency of this bird. I must give the story in the words of the naturalist: "A man who had been a pirate, assured me that several times, while at certain wells dug in the burning shelly sand of a well known key, which must here be nameless, the soft and melancholy cry of the doves awoke in his breast feelings which had long slumbered, melted his heart to repentance, and caused him to linger at the spot in a state of mind which he only who compares the wretchedness within



DOMESTIC DOVES.



him with the happiness of former innocence can truly feel. He never left the place without increased fears of fury, associated as he was, I believe by force, with a band of the most desperate villains that ever annoyed the navigation of the Florida coast. So moved was he by the notes of any bird, and especially by those of the dove, the only soothing sound he ever heard during his life of horrors, that through these plaintive notes, and them alone, he was induced to escape from his vessel, abandon his turbulent companions, and return to a family deploring his absence. After paying a visit to those wells, and listening once more to the cooing of the dove, he poured out his soul in supplication for mercy, and once more became what Pope declared to be 'the noblest work of God,' an honest man. His escape was effected amid difficulties and danger; but no danger seemed to be comparable with that of living in violation of human and divine laws; and now he lives in the midst of his friends."

Some one—I am unable to tell who—has made a sketch, in a poetical form, of the thoughts of a young dove, just beginning to fly. It is called "The Bird's Soliloquy," and as it is very pretty and very short, I will print it for you:

THE BIRD'S SOLILOQUY.

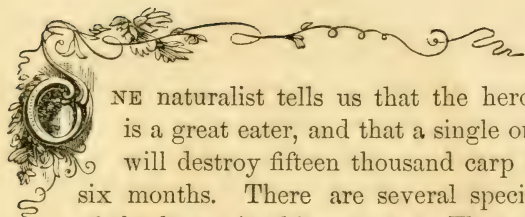
"I wish I dare venture, but how can I go
Far away from a home which has sheltered me so?
And what shall I do, when, from evening to morn,
I find myself friendless, and sad, and forlorn?
No mother comes near me—she left me to fly
In the path that she took to the beautiful sky;
And she warbled of blissful and glorious things,
Ere she waved an adieu with her fluttering wings.
I'll follow, and fear not—I'll mount up on high,
The zephyr will bear me—I'm on it—Good bye!"

Let us think of that heaven of glory and love,
Which to penitent sinners is promised above;
And try, like the joyful young bird, to arise,
On the pure wings of faith, to our home in the skies.



THE HERON

The Heron.



NE naturalist tells us that the heron is a great eater, and that a single one will destroy fifteen thousand carp in six months. There are several species of the heron in this country. They all fly gracefully, with the neck bent backward.

A work on the birds of Ireland has lately appeared, in which the author thus refers to a heron in confinement at Castle Warren, County of Cork: "The favorite food of this bird is eels; but any other fish will do as well. It frequently swallows four or five large herrings at a meal. Fresh meat, the entrails of fowls, &c. suffice as food. After feeding, it is very fond of basking in the heat of the sun, and will stand for hours with its wings expanded, enjoying the genial warmth. The bird is much attached to me. As I always feed it, it runs

toward me, shaking its wings, and keeping up a cry evidently of pleasure. It evinces much gentleness of disposition, and frequently stands caressing me with its bill. But to strangers its manners are very different, as it attacks them with the greatest fury, and although repeatedly driven back, will continue to return to the charge. It shows great hatred of dogs, and if one comes too near, he is greeted with a stroke of its bill, which sends him yelping away. I have seen it fighting, although only on the defensive, with a domestic cock. It was never wounded by that bird's spurs; for when attacked, the heron stands quite steady in the attitude in which it waits for prey, always facing, and closely watching every movement of its adversary, and striking him with its bill whenever he comes within reach of its long neck. When the cock flew upward, he was always driven back by a stroke of the heron's bill. The cock, in general, retreated on finding that he could make no impression on his watchful foe. The heron beats the cock by wearing out his patience, as it will remain for any length of time in an attitude of defence. The patience of a score of cocks would be worn out by this bird. During two months that I was absent from home, about the end of 1848,



THE HERONS AND THE HERRINGS.

the heron would not become familiar with any one, not even the person who fed it; in fact, it never was friendly with any one but myself. On my return after the absence alluded to, it recognized me instantly, and testified its joy by screaming and flapping its wings. It never, indeed, uttered a sound at the presence of any other person."

I must make the heron play his part in a fable, I guess. I am not sure but I can teach him to use his long bill to advantage, in helping to pick out some of the faults which one occasionally meets with among mankind. I mean to try him, at any rate. So here comes the fable of

THE HERONS AND THE HERRINGS.

I.

A Heron came down from his home in the sky,
To the court of his cousins the fishes,
With despatches so heavy he scarcely could fly,
And his bosom brimful of good wishes.

II.

That he was unfriendly to Herrings, he said,
He hoped there would be no suspicion;
His government wished to convert them instead,
And this was the end of his mission.

III.

The Herrings replied, and were civil enough,
Though a little inclined to be witty:—
“We know we are heathenish, savage, and rough,
And are greatly obliged for your pity.

IV.

“But your plan of conversion we beg to decline,
With all due respect for your nation;
No doubt it would tend to exalt and refine,
Yet we fear it would check respiration.”

V.

The Heron returned to his peers in disdain,
And told how their love was requited.
“Poor creatures!” they said; “shall we let them remain
So ignorant, blind, and benighted?”

VI.

Then soon on a crusade of love and good-will
The Herons in council decided;
And they flew, every one that could boast a long bill,
To the beach where the Herrings resided.

VII.

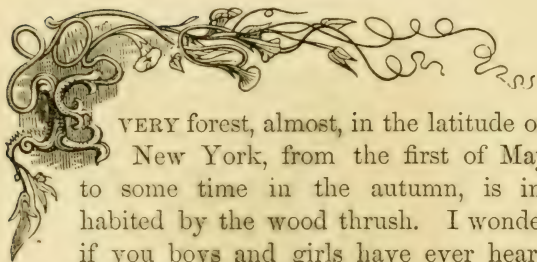
So the tribe were soon converts from ocean to air,
Though liking not much the diversion,
And wishing at least they had time to prepare
For so novel a mode of conversion.

VIII.

A sensible child will discover, with ease,
The point of the tale I've related;
A blockhead could not, let me say what I please.—
Then why need my *moral* be stated?



The Wood Thrush.



VERY forest, almost, in the latitude of New York, from the first of May to some time in the autumn, is inhabited by the wood thrush. I wonder if you boys and girls have ever heard his song. There is scarcely a greater singer in our woods. Oh how much I enjoyed the music of one last summer, in a forest near Saratoga Springs! The little fellow did not see me, I think. At all events, he allowed me to come within a few feet of the tree on which he was sitting; and for a long time I stood under the tree, listening to his sweet strains. I suppose he had a nest in that vicinity, and was singing for his mate, while she kept house. I did not see the nest, however, though I looked for it a great while, after the music was finished and the singer had flown



THE WOOD THRUSH.

away. Never in my life did I have so vivid a sense of the goodness of God in filling the forest, and meadow, and orchard, with the music of birds, as while this thrush was pouring out his melody. Oh how rich, how tender, how exquisite was this music! It subdued, calmed, melted, almost charmed me; and when that warbler flew away, and my eyes saw him no more, my spirit went with him, followed him in his flight, and caroled with him amid the dancing leaves of the deep forest. Hours afterward, while mingling with the gay crowd at my hotel, I seemed to hear the notes of that bird. *Seemed* to hear them! I *did* hear them. Does not the spirit hear voices and see scenes with which the outward ear and eye have nothing to do? "But that is imagination, fancy, delusion," you say. It is neither. It is reality—reality, I often think, in the very highest sense. "But the birds—the birds. Let us hear about the birds." That is precisely the matter I am talking about. Did it ever occur to you, little friend, what a similarity there is, in some respects, between a spirit—a human spirit—and a bird of the air?

Wilson tells us of one thrush in particular, with whom he was acquainted, that surprised and delighted him above measure. "I could

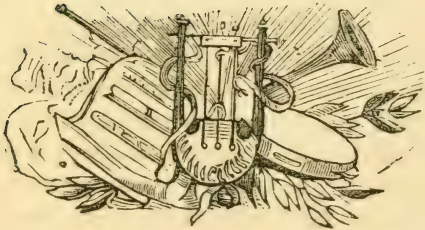
instantly recognize his voice," he says, "on entering the woods. The top of a large white oak, that overhung part of the glen, was usually the favorite pinnacle from which he poured the sweetest melody. I have frequently listened to his song till night overtook me in the woods, and the fire-flies began to sparkle among the branches. But alas, in the language of the poet,

'One morn I missed him on the accustomed hill,
Along the vale, and on his favorite tree—
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the glen, nor in the wood was he.'

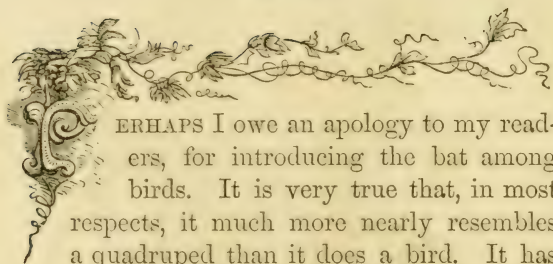
A few days afterward, passing along the edge of the rocks, I found fragments of the wings and broken feathers of a wood thrush, killed by a hawk, which I contemplated with unfeigned regret, and not without a determination to retaliate on the first of these murderers whom I should meet with."

Mr. Audubon says of the song of the wood thrush, "Although it is composed of but few notes, it is so powerful, distinct, clear, and mellow, that it is impossible for any one to hear it without being struck with the effect which it produces on the mind. I do not

know to what instrumental sounds to compare these notes, for I really know none which are so melodious. They gradually rise in strength, and then fall in gentle cadence, becoming at length so low as to be scarcely audible." So you see that I am not the only one who has come pretty near being charmed by the song of the wood thrush.



The Bat.



PERHAPS I owe an apology to my readers, for introducing the bat among birds. It is very true that, in most respects, it much more nearly resembles a quadruped than it does a bird. It has the power of flying, after a fashion; but that is almost the only bird-like feature about it. The bat, you know, has four legs. That circumstance alone is enough to give the family a title among quadrupeds, to say nothing about its want of feathers. The truth is the bat has not a very good right to a place among birds, and although there was formerly some difference of opinion in this matter, most naturalists, at the present day, rank this singular race of animals among quadrupeds. Still the great mass of people regard them as properly belonging to the rank of birds, and so, with the



THE BAT.

reader's permission, I will classify them in telling my stories.

If I have no other authority for putting them among my friends the birds, I have at least that of the cat in the fable, though I must confess that Puss' judgment, in this case, ought to be received with a good degree of caution. Are you acquainted with that fable, by the way? I will translate it for you. It is one of Perrin's, and is written in French. This is the English of it: "A cat, having been taken in a trap, promised a rat, who had liberated him, that he would never eat any more rats or mice. It happened one day, however, that the cat caught a bat in a barn. The old rogue did not know what to do, at first. But he soon made up his mind. 'I dare not eat thee as a mouse,' said he, 'on account of my promise. But I will eat thee as a bird.' With this nice distinction his conscience was satisfied."

In some parts of Africa, on the coast, bats are found in such flocks, that when they fly, they obscure the light of the setting sun. At the dawn of day, they are seen sticking upon the tops of the trees, and clinging to each other, like bees when they swarm. Europeans, visiting that country, sometimes amuse themselves by shooting among these large flocks.

The largest bat in the world is supposed to be the great bat of Madagascar. It is nearly four feet broad, when the wings are spread. Some people have called it the flying fox. When this bat rests at night, it sticks itself to the tops of the tallest trees, and hangs with its head downward.

A celebrated naturalist once made numerous experiments on the bat, and he became convinced that these animals possessed some additional sense, by which they are enabled to avoid obstacles, when in motion, even when deprived of sight. When their eyes were covered, as well as when quite destroyed, they would fly about in a room, carefully avoiding the sides, or any thing projecting in a narrow passage. They would invariably turn where the passage turned at right angles, and always keep in the middle. They never failed to avoid these objects, even passing carefully between two of them, when placed so near together, so to render it necessary to contract their wings as they passed.

The name of *vampyre* is given to a large species of bat distinguished by its habit of sucking the blood of living animals during their sleep; yet this habit is common, also, to most of the bats of Java, and other hot

climates. It is said to be exceedingly dangerous to sleep in the open air, in the island of Java, with the head and feet uncovered, or in the house, with the window open. Some of the species are so skilful in their operation of opening a vein, and thrusting their tongue into the wound, that people have been known to pass insensibly from the state of sleep to that of death. Besides blood, these animals also subsist on the juices of some kinds of fruit; and they are so fond of the juice of the palm tree, that they have been known to drink it, till they fall down insensible.

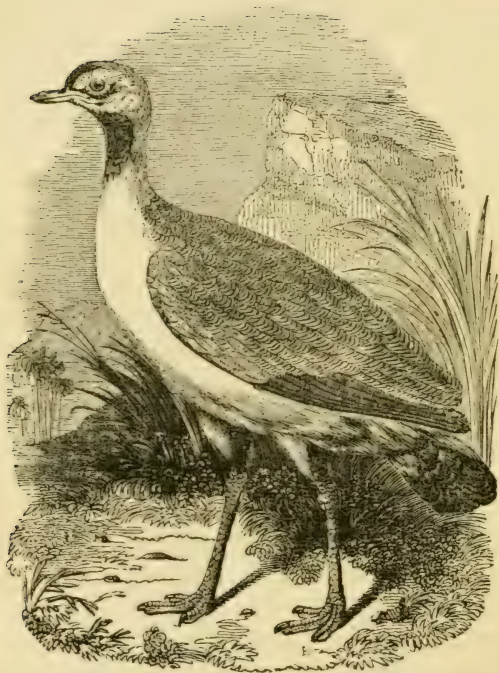
Finch, the traveler, informs us, that "they hang to the boughs of trees, near Surat, in the East Indies, in such vast clusters, as would surprise a man to see; and the squalling they make is so intolerable that it were a good deed to bring two or three pieces of cannon, and scour the trees, that the country might be rid of such a plague as they are to it."

More than twenty thousand bats were observed, in the space of a mile, at Port Jackson, in New Holland; and some that were caught alive ate out of the hands of those who caught them, and in a few days became as completely tame, as if they had been brought up in the house. One of these bats, belonging to Gov-

ernor Philip, would hang by one leg a whole day, without changing its position.

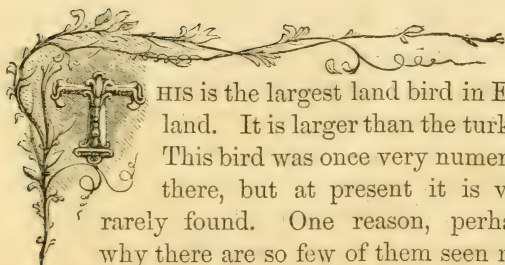
The *spectre* bat does not differ much in its habits from the vampyre. It is found in South America, and in some of the islands of the Pacific Ocean. Various travelers speak of its eagerness to suck human blood. Captain Stedman relates, that sleeping in the open air at Surinam, he was awakened about four o'clock in the morning, and exceedingly alarmed to find himself covered with blood, but feeling no pain. Rising up hastily, he ran to the surgeon, as he was all over besmeared with blood. It was soon discovered that he had been attacked by a bat, which was judged by the surgeon to have taken from him about fourteen ounces of blood.

When these animals discover a person in a sound sleep, they cautiously approach, gently fanning with their extended wings, by which means a soothing influence is thrown over the sleeper, which renders his sleep the sounder, while the bat cautiously goes on with his bleeding operation.



THE BUSTARD.

The Bustard.



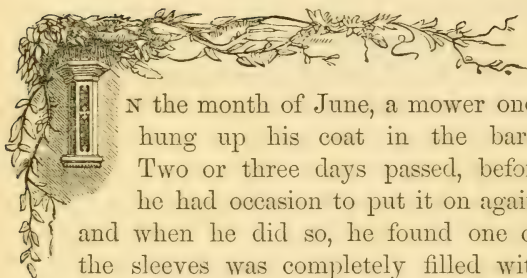
HIS is the largest land bird in England. It is larger than the turkey. This bird was once very numerous there, but at present it is very rarely found. One reason, perhaps, why there are so few of them seen now is owing to the delicacy of their flesh. They are very highly valued on this account. Their usual custom is to confine themselves within the circuit of an extensive barren plain. This they do to avoid the hunter. Having sentinels continually looking out for danger, the moment an enemy is discovered, notice is given to the company, and they instantly take to flight. It is in vain that the cunning hunter creeps cautiously and stealthily along toward them without making any noise. They are too wide awake to allow the enemy to approach near

STORIES ABOUT BIRDS.

enough to hit them with the contents of a fowling-piece. They are sometimes run down by greyhounds, however. When they have been eating too much, so that they cannot move as rapidly as they otherwise could, the greyhound succeeds in tiring them out and capturing them. The bustard runs off, when he sees the dog, and flaps his wings, so as to gather air enough under them to enable him to rise. In the mean time, the enemy approaches nearer and nearer, till it is too late for the bird to think of obtaining safety by flight; for, just as he begins to rise in the air, as the bird himself very well knows, there is always a loss of time. He is obliged to continue on foot, and so he is taken.



The Wren.



IN the month of June, a mower once hung up his coat in the barn. Two or three days passed, before he had occasion to put it on again, and when he did so, he found one of the sleeves was completely filled with rubbish. When he examined more closely, it proved to be the nest of a wren, completely finished, and lined with a great quantity of feathers. He was walking away with the coat, when he was followed by the little rogues who had built the nest. They scolded him soundly, for thus ruining the house that had cost them so much labor.

This story reminds me of what I saw, during a recent visit in the family of a friend in Monmouth county, N. J. A large piece of canvas had been rolled up, and placed on a

beam under a wood-shed. A pair of wrens took it into their heads that one of the folds in this canvas was a nice place to make a nest, and bring up a family of children, and the situation was selected. When I was there, I had the satisfaction of taking a peep at the nest. It was a gem of a thing. There were three or four young ones in it at the time.

The following anecdote I relate on the authority of Wilson: "A box," he says, "fitted up in the window of the room where I slept, was taken possession of by a pair of wrens. Already the nest was built, and two eggs laid; when one day, the window being open, as well as the door, the female wren, venturing too far into the room, was sprung upon by the cat, and destroyed. Curious to know how the surviving wren would act in the circumstances, I watched him carefully for several days. At first he sang, with great spirit. This continued for an hour or two. After this, becoming uneasy, he went off for an hour. On his return, he chanted again, as before, and went to the top of the house, stable, and weeping willow, so that his mate would hear him; but seeing nothing of her, he returned once more, visited the nest, ventured cautiously into the window, gazed about with suspicious looks,

his voice sinking into a low, sad tone, as he stretched his neck in every direction. Returning to the box, he seemed for some minutes quite at a loss what to do, and soon went off, as I thought, altogether, for I saw no more of him that day. Toward the afternoon of the second day, he again made his appearance, in company with another female, who seemed exceedingly shy, and, though not until after a great deal of hesitation, entered the box. At this moment, the little widower seemed as if he would warble his very life out with joy. They afterward raised a brood of seven young ones, all of whom left the nest, at the proper time, in safety."

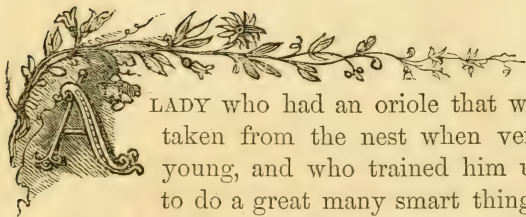
It is amusing to see the movements of a family of wrens while they are building their nest in a tree near the house. A few years ago, I had an opportunity to watch a pair of them from the time they held the first council as to the place where their nest should be placed, until the last piece of hair was woven into the lining. They were as busy as they could be during this season. One day I saw one of the birds tugging at the end of some cotton thread. It was wound on a spool which had fallen out of the window. It would have made you laugh heartily, I am sure, to have

seen the little fellow attempt to fly to his nest with the thread. He found it a difficult matter, as you may suppose. It was hard work. I guess he tried fifty times before he could reach the hole in the tree where his nest was; and after he had got there, with the end of the thread, he was sadly puzzled to know what to do next. He pulled away lustily at the thread; but it was of no use. By and by, his mate arrived, and then they both took hold, and tried with all their might to "haul in the slack," as the sailors would say. It was a bad job, though. They had to give it up at last, and let the thread fall to the ground.



THE LADY AND HER ORIOLE.

The Oriole.



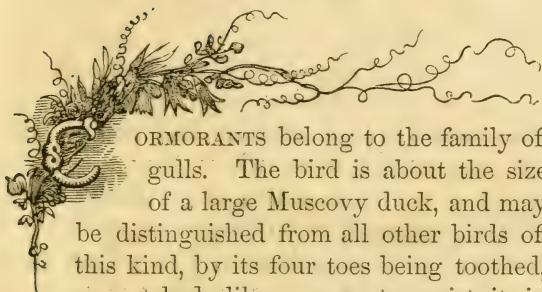
LADY who had an oriole that was taken from the nest when very young, and who trained him up to do a great many smart things, says, "I taught him to feed from my mouth; and he would often alight on my finger, and strike the end with his bill, until I raised him to my mouth, when he would insert his bill, to see what I had for him to eat. In winter, spring, and autumn, he slept in a cage, lined with cotton batting. After I had put him in, if I did not close up the holes with cotton, he would do so himself, by pulling the cotton from the sides of the cage with his bill, till he had shut up all the holes. I fed him with sponge cake; and when this became dry and hard, he would take a piece, and drop it into the saucer, and move it about until it was soft

enough to be eaten. In very cold weather, he would fly to me, get under my cape, and nestle down upon my neck. He often perched upon my finger, and drew my needle and thread away from me while I was sewing. At such times, if any child approached me, and pulled my dress, he would chase after the offender, with his wings and tail spread, and apparently in great anger. When I have been confined to my bed, on account of sickness, the little pet would visit my pillow many times during the day, often creeping under the bed-clothes. At such times, he was always low-spirited. When he wanted to bathe, he would come up to me with a very expressive look, and shake his wings. On my return home from a visit, he would always show his pleasure by a peculiar sound."



THE CORMORANT.

The Cormorant.



ORMORANTS belong to the family of gulls. The bird is about the size of a large Muscovy duck, and may be distinguished from all other birds of this kind, by its four toes being toothed, or notched, like a saw, to assist it in holding its fishy prey. The head and neck of this bird are of a sooty blackness; and the body thick and heavy, more inclining in figure to that of the goose than the gull. The bill is straight, till near the end, where the upper part bends into a hook. They are very expert in catching fish. They used to be trained in England so that they would fish for their masters, and they are still used in China for this purpose.

A gentleman who made a visit to China some years ago, described the manner in which these

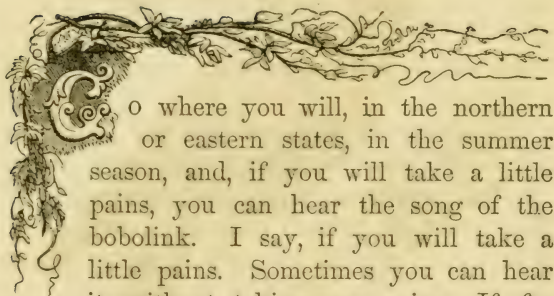
birds performed their task. He says, "The birds are educated as men rear up spaniels or hawks, and one man can easily manage a hundred. The fisher carries them out into the lake, perched on the gunwale of his boat, where they continue tranquil, and expecting his orders with patience. When arrived at the proper place, at the first signal given, each flies a different way to fulfill the task assigned it. It is very pleasing, on this occasion, to observe with what sagacity they portion out the lake or the canal where they are upon duty. They hunt about, they plunge, they rise a hundred times to the surface, until they have at last found their prey. They then seize it with their beak by the middle, and carry it to their master. When the fish is too large, they give each other mutual assistance; one seizes it by the head, the other by the tail, and thus carry it to the boat together. There the boatman stretches out one of his long oars, on which they perch, and on being delivered of their burden, they fly off to continue their sport. When wearied, he allows them to rest for a while; but they are never fed till their work is over. In this manner they supply a very plentiful table; but still, their natural gluttony cannot even be reclaimed by educa-

tion. They have always, while they fish, a string fastened round their throats, to prevent them from devouring their prey, or otherwise they would at once satiate themselves, and discontinue their pursuit the moment they had done so."

The great activity with which it pursues, and from a vast height drops down to dive after its prey, offers one of the most amusing spectacles to those who stand upon a cliff on the shore.

It sometimes happens that the cormorant has caught a fish by the tail, and consequently the fins prevent its being easily swallowed in that position. In this case, the bird may be observed to toss its prey above its head, and very dexterously catch it, when descending, by the proper end, and to swallow it with ease.

The Bobolink.



o where you will, in the northern or eastern states, in the summer season, and, if you will take a little pains, you can hear the song of the bobolink. I say, if you will take a little pains. Sometimes you can hear it, without taking any pains. If, for instance, you chance to be rambling in the meadow, among the wild flowers, in the month of June, you cannot well avoid listening to the songster. If he is anywhere about, he will take good care that you do not leave his premises without giving you a chance to hear him. "But is he proud of his music?" Why, no, not exactly. "Then why is he so anxious that I should hear him sing?" Well, I suppose the truth is just this: he is full of life and glee—so full that he cannot keep still;



THE BOBOLINK.

and, besides, like others who are very happy, I suspect he wants every body else to be happy, too. That is the way with many boys and girls. They love to get a chance to chat with every body they meet, not because they are vain enough to suppose they have any thing very pretty to say, but because they are happy—so happy, that, if they attempt to dam up the stream of enjoyment, it overflows its banks.

I have stopped, many a time, while passing by a meadow, where the bobolink was performing his solo, on purpose to hear his tune. There is something so cheerful, so full of fun, and so musical withal, in his song, that I can listen to it for an hour, without getting tired. It makes me laugh now, to think with what a comic gravity—if I may use such a term—his strains are sung. He begins slowly, coolly, solemnly: "*Aw—koo—cro—cray*," and so on. That is the prelude. It means—so I understand it; other folks, may translate it as they choose—"Good people if you have nothing better to do, listen to the song of a plain, old-fashioned bobolink." Well, the introduction being over, the merry-hearted fellow gradually quickens the movement of the air. In other words—to use the terms employed in the

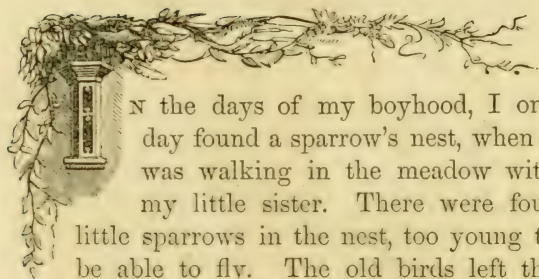
singing-book—he exchanges the *maëstoso* and *adagio* for the *allegro* and *vigoroso*. By the time he gets half through his song, he sings as fast as he can utter the notes. Oh, you ought to hear the bobolink, my little friend—you ought to hear him, by all means; and you ought to see him, too, while he is in the act of singing, as if for his life. He makes such odd gestures with his head, to give his music peculiar effect! When half a dozen of these birds have a concert together, they have a great time of it. Every one seems to be ambitious to outsing all the rest.

This bird is so cunning, and so quick on the wing, that he can generally dodge the sportsman, when he is so cruel as to attempt to shoot him. I am told that it is sometimes provoking to those who wish to capture the fellow, to perceive how coolly he takes a shot. He sees the flash of the priming in the gun, or hears the lock snap, and as quick as a flash of lightning he is off. But he does not trouble himself to fly away at any considerable distance. He alights, perhaps, on a tree close by, and goes to singing as merrily as if nothing had happened. Very likely he takes up his song, just where he dropped it, when the gun was fired. He nods and shakes his head, they say, at such

times, so meaningly, that the hunter gets quite out of patience with him, as he loads his gun again, and prepares for another shot. "*Sphe-dilly, sphe-dilly*," so the song goes on, when—*bang!*—The gun is discharged, with just the same success as before; and the bird dodges, flies away to the next tree, and laughs, with all his might, at the foolish fellow who is burning up his powder for nothing: "*Chick, chick, sphe sphilly che-fillink!*" says he, meaning, I suppose, "Bang away, my boy; guess you'll hit him next time. Ha! ha! ha! Try, try again!"

I have often wished that this bird had a better name. *Bobolink* is not half musical enough. In some parts of the United States people call him the *rice bird*, or the *rice bunting*; in others, the *reed bird*; and by some, in the southern states, he is called the *meadow bird*. In New England, and perhaps throughout the northern states, he generally goes by the name of *bobolink*. Either of the other names pleases me better than the one to which I have been accustomed from childhood; but none of these, even, suit me exactly.

The Sparrow.



IN the days of my boyhood, I one day found a sparrow's nest, when I was walking in the meadow with my little sister. There were four little sparrows in the nest, too young to be able to fly. The old birds left the nest as we approached, and hovered around, not far off, showing a great deal of love for their offspring, and evidently not a little afraid that they were soon to be left childless. Both my sister and myself looked upon this scene for some minutes with a great deal of interest. We examined the nest, and admired the skill and ingenuity which the birds had displayed in building it. How nicely it was braided together. There were coarse straws and sticks on the outside of it, and on the inside there were fine hairs, and little bits of cotton, and



THE SPARROW.

wool, and thistle down, curiously and beautifully interwoven. It was a charming piece of workmanship, that little sparrow's nest. Well, as I stood there looking at it, I thought it would be a fine thing to take those little sparrows home with us, nest and all. I had never had any tame birds; and I did not doubt that I could soon make these sparrows so tame that they would come and hop upon my shoulder, when I called them. Forgetting every kind and generous feeling, in this one selfish desire, I was about to climb up the tree, and secure the helpless sparrows, when my sister made such an appeal to my better feelings, that my arm was entirely unnerved. I did not violate the peace of that happy family, but left them chirping their gratitude and gladness. Boys have often strong temptations to rob the nests of the beautiful birds that cluster around the abodes of men, so confidently, so lovingly. I have had some such temptations. But never, since my sister's eloquent plea for the young sparrows, have I yielded to this temptation. That plea has secured the happiness of many a forest warbler. I owe much of the good-will I have ever cherished toward the birds, to the tenderness with which she always treated them.

A clerical friend, residing in Connecticut,

gives me the biography of a little ground sparrow—or chipping bird, as it is sometimes called—that his son caught and tamed. The boy took the young bird, put it into a cage, and set the cage in the window, so that the old bird might come and feed it. Very soon the mother bird discovered his whereabouts, and brought him his food regularly for some time. If crumbs were put on the top of the cage, it was amusing to see the old bird go and pick them up, and take them in her mouth to little Dicky—the name given to the young one—and to see him open his little bill to receive them from his mother's. After Dicky got old enough to pick up crumbs for himself, his mother ceased to pay him her daily visits. Dicky soon became so familiar with the family, that he would sit upon the finger of any of them. When he was let out of the cage, he would fly about the room without fear, and amuse himself by catching flies. Finally he was so tame, that he would follow a member of the family from room to room. Several times, the window being open, he took it into his head to take exercise in the open air. Once or twice he was out all night, but glad to come home for his breakfast in the morning. He became the pet of all the family. The family

hoped to have enjoyed the pleasure of his company for a long time, but Providence had ordered otherwise. One day, as poor Dicky was taking his daily walk in the open air, feeling at peace with all the world, and thinking that no one could have it in his heart to do him an injury, he carelessly ventured too near a young chanticleer, who killed the little fellow instantly.

A great many years ago, a Spanish lady, of noble rank, was confined for a long time in a lonely castle. I do not remember the reason why she was shut up in this gloomy place. Very likely she had done something which gave offence to the priests, and so she was condemned by the inquisition to suffer this punishment. This lady was one day sitting at the window of her prison, looking out upon the beautiful earth, all clad in the sweet flowers of spring, when a little young sparrow flew into the room. She was glad to see him—for she felt very lonely and friendless—and she wanted him to stay with her, and keep her company. So she shut down her window, and made the little fellow a prisoner. “But was that right?” one of my readers inquires. Why, yes, I think it was right. The lady, you must remember, was shut out from the world. She had no one

near her, whom she could call a friend. She was not allowed to converse with any body. She was alone, all alone. I am sure I can pardon her for trying to persuade that bird to be happy with her. She fed the little thing with a part of the bread which was given her for her own food. She was very kind to him, and took the greatest possible care of him. He became attached to her, and the two loved each other very much. In a few weeks the sparrow was so tame that he would eat out of the hand of his companion. At length, the window was left open, and he was allowed to fly out. But he came back again. After this, he would go out every day, and sometimes several times in a day, and always returned after he had been absent a little while. This lady, after she was released from her confinement, said that the little sparrow almost made her feel happy in that prison. "What would have become of me," said she, "through all those long, long hours, if it had not been for the society of that dear bird? I do believe, if he had been taken away from me, after I had become so much attached to him, that I should have died."

How much a friend, of some kind or other, is worth to a person, when he is shut out from society! Baron Trenck, you know, who was



THE PET BIRD.

confined for a long time in one of the dismal dungeons of Prussia, formed a strong attachment to a spider which had woven a web in one corner of the room. The spider was the only friend he had in the prison. He spent hours in the company of that insect; and when, at length, the jailer destroyed the web, the Baron, according to his own story, was overwhelmed with grief.

I must tell you something about the bottle-nested sparrow. This bird does not live in our country. His home is in Hindoostan and in that vicinity. He builds a very curious nest, and has some exceedingly singular habits. He prefers to build his nest on the highest tree he can find—if it should overhang a well, or a small stream, all the better. The nest is made of grass, which the bird weaves like cloth, and shapes like a bottle, hanging it firmly on the branches, but so that it will rock with the wind. It is always built with the mouth downward, so as to secure it from the birds of prey. There is another curious thing about it. Those who have examined it tell us that it consists of two or three different chambers, which are used for different purposes. Some people say that this bird catches glow-worms, and confines them in his nest, so as to afford the family

light in the night. Of that fact, however, I am a little doubtful. All who have examined the nests carefully, agree that it is very common to see glow-worms in them. So far there need be no doubt. But as to the notion that the worms are used as lamps—I do not know about that. Is it not more probable that the glow-worms serve as food? I should think so. But a gentleman who has resided a long time in the East Indies, where these birds are common, and who has had abundant opportunities to learn their habits, thinks differently. Suppose we let him tell his story: “Desiring,” he says, “to ascertain the truth in relation to the common opinion here as to the use made of the glow-worm in the sparrow’s nest, I took advantage of the absence of the birds, one day, about four o’clock in the afternoon, and directed a servant to prevent their return, while I examined their nest. I cut the nest open, and found in it a full-sized glow-worm, fastened to the inside with a peculiar kind of clay. Having sewed up the division, I replaced the nest. I looked at it on the following evening, and found there another smaller-sized glow-worm, with fresh clay, a little on one side of the spot from which I took the former one. I afterward tried the experiment on three other nests,

and in two of them the same results followed. In the other the fresh clay was brought, but there was no glow-worm. That the worm is placed in the nest as food, is, I think, extremely doubtful, from the fact of its being fixed in the clay. That would seem to be a useless labor, if it was to be used for such a purpose."

What a great time the sparrows have in the fall of the year, making preparations to go on their southern journey. They seem to be very fond of company. "The more the merrier," is their motto. When the leaves of the forest trees begin to fade, and the first frosts appear, these little birds begin to assemble in flocks. At first, you will see only a dozen or two together. But the number rapidly increases as the autumn advances. Before the weather becomes very cold, hundreds join the party. They seem to know, by the signs they discover around them, that winter is coming; and so they set themselves about the business of preparing for it.

Dear reader, these little birds show their wisdom in this provision for the future. They are taught that they cannot endure the cold of a northern clime—that they cannot remain where the ground is wrapped in a mantle of snow. In the language of another,

"Thus taught, they meditate a speedy flight;
For this, even now they prune their vig'rous wing;
For this, consult, advise, prepare, excite;
And prove their strength in many an airy ring.

And does no power its friendly aid dispense,
Nor give us tidings of some happier clime?
Find we no guide in gracious Providence,
Beyond the stroke of death, the verge of time?

Yes, yes, the sacred oracles we hear,
That point the path to realms of endless day;
That bid our hearts, nor death, nor anguish fear;
This, future transport; that, to life the way.

Then let us timely for our flight prepare,
And form the soul for her divine abode;
Obey the call, and trust our leader's care,
To bring us safe to see our Father, God.

Let no fond love for earth exact a sigh;
No doubts divert our steady steps aside;
Nor let us long to live, nor dread to die;
Heaven is our hope, and Providence our guide!"

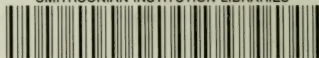
THE END.







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